

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

**1. Name of Property**Historic name: Chester Fritz AuditoriumOther names/site number: "The Fritz"Name of related multiple property listing: N/A**2. Location**Street & number: 3475 University AvenueCity or town: Grand Forks State: North Dakota County: Grand ForksNot For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this \_\_\_ nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A \_\_\_ B X C \_\_\_ D

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title:\_\_\_\_\_  
Date\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official:\_\_\_\_\_  
Date\_\_\_\_\_  
Title :\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency/bureau  
or Tribal Government

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register  
☐ determined eligible for the National Register  
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register  
☐ removed from the National Register  
☐ other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private: ☐  
Public – Local ☐  
Public – State ☒  
Public – Federal ☐

##### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s) ☒  
District ☐  
Site ☐  
Structure ☐  
Object ☐

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>                    </u>	buildings
<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	sites
<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	structures
<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>                    </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register                     

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION: college

AUDITORIUM: Auditorium

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION: college

AUDITORIUM: Auditorium

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT: late-Modernist

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Foundation: Concrete, Walls: Precast Concrete, Brick; Other: Stucco Roof: synthetic membrane

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The Chester Fritz Auditorium is a performing arts venue at the University of North Dakota campus in Grand Forks, North Dakota. The design of the late-Modernist auditorium, completed in 1972, was developed with the arrangement of interior spaces around the auditorium's main house expressed through the building's exterior form and massing. The Chester Fritz Auditorium has been continually used for touring artists, ceremonies, and the University's music and theatre performances for the past fifty years. Although the building has had updates to some of the original interior finishes, lighting and sound systems, and equipment, there have been few alterations to the function of interior spaces or the building's exterior since its construction. The Chester Fritz Auditorium retains sufficient integrity to convey its historical associations.

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## Narrative Description

### LOCATION AND SETTING

The Chester Fritz Auditorium in Grand Forks, North Dakota, is a versatile performing arts venue designed to serve as an auditorium, concert hall, and theater. It is used for touring artists, graduations, inaugurations, and the University's music and theatre performances. The building is centrally located on the University of North Dakota campus at 3475 University Avenue, the primary route running through campus. The auditorium is situated just outside the westernmost boundary of the University of North Dakota Historic District, its edge delineated following the English Coulee. The English Coulee is a meandering stream running northward through Grand Forks that bisects the campus and divides the University's historical phases of development. To the east, the Core Campus contains the University's oldest buildings and is predominately composed of Collegiate Gothic-style architecture. West of the English Coulee, the design of campus buildings makes a distinct change to Modernist and contemporary architecture, comprised of buildings constructed after implementing a new campus plan developed in 1964.

The Chester Fritz Auditorium, "dramatizing the heart of the University," faces east, overlooking the scenic English Coulee. The Johnstone Complex, a dormitory block, and the Smith Lawn sculpture court are sited on the opposite bank. Yale Drive passes between the building's entrance and the English Coulee, with enlarged drop-off lanes near the building. The Chester Fritz Auditorium visually stands alone, flanked by large greenspaces to the north and south sides. These lawn areas are transected by sidewalks and shaded by deciduous trees, visibly separating the auditorium from University Avenue and the Wilkerson Complex to the north and parking lots on the south and west sides of the building. A service drive to the building's loading dock crosses the greenspace on the south side of the building. The Gorecki Alumni Center, which opened in 2012, is situated near the northwest corner of the auditorium. Before the construction of the Alumni Center, the site west of the Auditorium extended to Stanford Road (formerly Dartmouth Drive). Other than the recent construction of the neighboring Gorecki Alumni Center and changes made to the routing of Yale Drive, the setting around the Chester Fritz Auditorium has remained relatively unchanged within the immediate vicinity of the building over the years.

### DESIGN, MATERIALS, AND CHARACTERISTICS

The late-Modernist Chester Fritz Auditorium has an irregular plan measuring 170' wide and 220' deep. The building is symmetrically arranged around the main house of the auditorium, with the interior program reflected by the exterior form of the building. The building's design can be summarized as a central form composed of the auditorium's house and stage constructed of concrete panels, hemmed by supporting building programming positioned between planes of brick walls, and punctuated by curtain wall openings. The auditorium resembles a megaphone speaker shell designed to project sound from the stage to the audience. The average height of the auditorium is 85', equivalent to a seven-story building, and the ground floor covers more than 26,000 square feet.

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The building is constructed of prefabricated concrete panels, reinforced concrete, and steel framing. The exterior walls are exposed concrete double-tee panels or are clad with rockface Hebron face brick. The brick was selected to relate the contemporary structure to the earlier architectural fabric on campus, primarily composed of brick Collegiate Gothic-style architecture. The verticality of the auditorium's design, particularly at the front portico with slight arches, also subtly references the Collegiate Gothic style. The prefabricated concrete and brick were both manufactured in North Dakota.

The primary façade of the Chester Fritz Auditorium faces east, with two main entrances centered on two articulated wall planes. The unusual V-shaped front of the auditorium creates a strong, impressive visual aesthetic highlighting the front-of-house (lobbies, foyers, and related public spaces) inside. Projecting from this façade is a covered porch with eight elongated bays. An observation deck/balcony with U-shaped metal railings protrudes low from the portico, hovering over the two entrances at grade. Concrete beams and columns support the second-story balconies with a white stucco finish. Tall, slender steel columns carry a towering porch roof with subtle arches and stucco vaulted soffits at each bay.

The massing of the primary façade, clad with face brick, is nearly 60' tall with four vertical bays of unadorned brick planes. The brick is separated by three bays of curtain wall glazing framed by projecting brick pilasters. The design is symmetrically arranged, with curtain walls extending above wooden two-lite double doors (with sidelights and rectangular transoms) at grade and the balcony level. A center bay of curtain wall windows is formed at the apex where the two angled façades converge. The curtain walls extend from grade level to the porch roof, with opaque spandrel panels at the balcony and upper-level lobby floors. The curtain walls at the east are primarily the original wood-framed curtain walls. However, the exterior of the entrance vestibules (located below the balconies) are replaced with aluminum storefront systems matching the original curtain wall design. The original wood entry doors (stained red) have been restored and reused in the new storefront. The roof fascia echoes the profile of double-tee wall panels in stucco over metal lath.

The fronting façade is stepped back in two fifteen-foot bays at the north and south sides of the building. The parallel planes create a layered effect of three brick walls. The southeast- and northeast-facing flat planes of brick are unadorned except for metal sign letters that read "CHESTER FRITZ AUDITORIUM" and louvered vents concealed by matching the brick color. The metal lettering is commonplace signage throughout campus on buildings constructed in the same era, indicating each building by name.

Set perpendicular between the planes of brick walls at the north and south are two curtain walls of windows facing southwest and northwest that are continuous to the metal roof edge. These curtain walls are inset about 2' between the projected ends of the layered brick wall planes. The easternmost curtain walls are fully glazed except for louvered mechanical vents at the upper levels. The westernmost curtain walls have double doors with sidelights at grade. The uppermost panels and those located at interior floor levels are opaque spandrel panels. Depending on the time of day and lighting conditions, the painted concrete stairwells ascending within are visible through the large western wall of glazing.

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Beyond the layered brick forms of the front of the house, the large massing of the auditorium—constructed of precast concrete double-tee wall panels—rises above the east-facing brick walls to over 90' above ground level. The panels' stems/webs incorporate a vertical texture and create strong patterns of light and shadow, accentuating the massive form of the auditorium within. The vertical ribs provide a dramatic combination of structural strength and the aesthetic beauty of vertical line patterning.

The concrete panel massing of the auditorium continues at the north and south elevations. The double-tee wall panels begin about 9' above grade, with face brick walls creating a plinth below. The corresponding paint color again integrates louvered vents by visually concealing them along the brick wall. The concrete tee panels are vertically arranged with a continuous horizontal line about midway at the panel joints. The rising concrete form reflects the auditorium's main house and stage, resembling the shape of a megaphone. The flat-topped form of the stage area at the west drops at the auditorium's main house before gradually rising towards the east.

On the northwest and southwest corners of the building are the brick back-of-house areas located below the vertical concrete form of the stage. Similarly designed at the north and south sides, the forms are symmetrical, rising two-and-a-half stories above grade. The brick-constructed walls echo the massing at the eastern front-of-house with articulated planes of face brick. Brick pilasters project from the brick planes to frame two vertical bands of curtain wall fenestration at both the north and south sides. The easternmost curtain walls contain double doors exiting the auditorium via an interior concourse. The westernmost vertical curtain wall on the south side is comprised of opaque panels above an overhead door and a loading dock. At the corresponding bay on the north side of the building, the bottom of the curtain wall is raised above grade with a cast stone sill. Facing west, adjacent to the upward-extending form of the stage, are two curtain walls, each with a single door at grade. The southern door is the stage door, and the northern entrance is for the performers.

At the west façade, the double-tee wall panels of the stage area begin above the brick-faced plinth below, similar to the north and south sides, but with six exposed concrete piers symmetrically spaced between the brick surfaces. The top of the concrete panels extends 90' above grade. Four former smoke vents have been infilled with plywood between the stems of the concrete panels.

Although the building's design has been regarded as simple, even stark in outward appearance, the interior remains bright, vivid, and even somewhat opulent. The spacious main lobby extends five stories and is filled with natural light. The Starcher Chandelier is featured in this public space, hanging above the fifth level. It was custom-made in Italy and given in honor of President-Emeritus George W. Starcher.<sup>1</sup> Approximately 30 lamps light the classic regency-style fixture, blending with 5,550 lead crystal beads, prisms, and teardrops.

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<sup>1</sup> The gift was announced at the May 7, 1971, campus-community recognition dinner for the Starchers in recognition of their appreciation for the fine arts.

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The main lobby space is shared vertically with five secondary lobbies. The levels are accessed via two wide, open-tread stairways at the north and south sides of the main lobby and two elevators, providing convenient access to the house's three levels. Lobby columns with aggregate-faced plywood accentuate the verticality of the space. The aggregate wraps along the second-level lobby's ceiling planes, forming a radial pattern focused toward the main house. This level also extends across the main lobby via two bridges to a lounge area situated on the east side of the building. The lounge area opens to the two exterior balconies. The different lobby levels offer views to the east overlooking the English Coulee.

Black U-shaped metal railings and a dark stained oak handrail, with a patterned band of contrasting light-colored oak inlay, enclose the stairways and floors overlooking the main lobby. The lobby's color scheme is white with red accent walls. The carpet of the lobbies is a floral pattern of red, green, black, and white, and the carpet on the open-tread stairs is black with flecks of color. Framed portraits of performers at "The Fritz" line the lobby walls. Original fixtures and furnishings in the lobby spaces include brushed metal pendant light fixtures that hang above and below the bridges, the stands for programs located near entrances to the main house, and mid-century style benches, couches, and chairs (some have been reupholstered).

Located north and south of the lobbies are foyers leading to enclosed stairwells and concourses at the second-level lobby—the stairwells discharge to the exterior at the north and south sides of the building. A continuous vertical wall between the concrete stair runs, articulated with sloped guardrails matching the incline of the stair and painted a saffron color, playfully highlighting the space. Original brushed metal wall sconces are located at each side of the stair landings. The concourses traversing the north and south sides of the auditorium's house display photos of past performers and extend to the western exit doors.

The auditorium's house offers seating for 2,352 people, approximately 1,200 on the main floor and 600 at each balcony level—the mezzanine (or first balcony) and the upper balcony. The main floor gradually slopes towards the stage. The mezzanine, also called the first balcony, begins on the second floor at the east and descends to the stage level with side balconies curving along the north and south walls. The upper balcony is steeply pitched, rising high above the main floor, and overlooks the stage. Tempered glass panels increase the height of the mezzanine and upper balcony railings while maintaining a clear view of the stage.

The auditorium's house, designed around requirements specified by an acoustical consultant, is dominated by features designed to enhance the building's sound qualities. Thirty-six "clouds" of curved laminated wood panels, each 12' x 20', are suspended from the roof. The ceiling, curved walls, and the scalloped fronts of the upper and mezzanine level balconies control reverberations in consistent patterns to preserve the sound originating from the performance. A sound reinforcement system and acoustical drapes, their tracks concealed between the curved walls, can alter acoustic performance when needed.

According to architect Myron Denbrook, the building is deliberately designed as "a place for hearing." The orchestra shell, created on a "megaphone principle," projects sound toward the audience and is devised so the furthest seats from the stage, located at the rear of the upper



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balcony, are 110' from the forestage. All seating is located within 80' of the stage at the main level.

The proscenium opening, the visual portion of the stage, is 60' wide and 30' high with a depth of 56'. A sound system is located center-top of the arch. The stage floor is partially trapped, permitting sections to be removed for special effects. The orchestra pit can be raised via a hydraulic lift and set to form a larger stage area. The flyloft, located on the north side of the stage, is 62' high and equipped with numerous lines for raising and lowering scenery, a retractable screen, and a firewall curtain system to protect the audience in the event of a fire. The south side of the stage opens to the shop area (loading dock) and stage door. Lights for the stage are controlled at the light booth located on the sixth level.

The back-of-house area for performers is located at the northwest corner of the building and below the stage area. There are several dressing rooms of varying sizes for star performers, small ensembles, and large groups of musicians. A large rehearsal room, capable of being divided into two rehearsal areas, is located directly below the main house. The basement level also includes extensive storage, work areas, and mechanical rooms.

## ALTERATIONS AND RENOVATIONS

The Chester Fritz Auditorium continues to be used as a venue for performing arts. Upgrades, repairs, and improvements have been necessary to keep the auditorium operating efficiently and up-to-date on technologies. Lighting, the sound system, and stage equipment have been updated and replaced as the original components became obsolete and difficult to repair.

Updates to interior finishes have been necessary for some areas of the building because of heavy use, including new carpeting in all building areas. Once decorated in variations of yellows, orange, rust, and brown, the color scheme in the lobbies has been repainted in more neutral tones and redecorated. Most materials, fixtures, and furnishings in this area are original; however, the new paint colors and carpet updated the prominent 1970s monochromatic color palette to be more agreeable to today's visitors. The main floor and mezzanine level balcony seats have been refurbished and reupholstered. The original red velour seats are still extant on the upper balcony because they are used less frequently.

The Chester Fritz Auditorium was designed with future changes in mind. A souvenir booklet produced shortly after the building was completed noted, "It is impossible to predict the precise nature of all the activities to take place in the auditorium in the years ahead because the performing arts are dynamic. They are different from yesterday. They will change tomorrow."<sup>2</sup> The foresight and planning during the design process contemplated the changing needs of a performance venue and have, in all probability, contributed to the building's continual use for over fifty years. The general usage, flow, and connection between interior spaces remain as initially planned.

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<sup>2</sup> Harvey A. Jacobson, ed., *Chester Fritz Auditorium* (University of North Dakota: University Press, October 1972), 34.

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There have been few modifications to the exterior since the Auditorium's construction. Most of the original wood-framed curtain walls have been replaced with an aluminum curtain wall system, which does alter the material integrity. However, the replaced windows and doors closely resemble and convey the original design's configuration and color scheme. The original doors have been restored and reused in some locations, such as the main entrance vestibules, within the new curtain wall systems. The auditorium has minor areas of deterioration due to weathering and age at the exterior, observed at the extant wood curtain wall systems, the stucco finish of the concrete columns at the east entrances (particularly where they meet the sidewalk), and at repairs made to limited areas of the concrete panels. Overall, the building has been well maintained and is in good condition.

Many buildings on the University of North Dakota campus were built before the 1940s or during a post-World War II building boom. The University faces aging facilities throughout campus that need repairs and upgrades due to deferred maintenance, code updates, increasing accessibility, and updates to fire and life safety systems. Updates recently completed at the Chester Fritz Auditorium have been guided by a campus master plan developed in 2016, in which all campus buildings were assessed to identify ways to maximize the life of existing facilities. The study's recommended repairs that have been completed at the auditorium include replacement windows and doors (to increase accessibility and replace deteriorating wood curtainwalls), replacing flooring, on-site pedestrian paving renewal leading to and around the building, and updates to the building's heating and cooling systems.

## CONCLUSION

The Chester Fritz Auditorium retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic character and historical associations. The original location and setting within the University of North Dakota Campus have remained virtually the same within the immediate vicinity of the auditorium since its construction, except for the more recent construction of the neighboring Gorecki Alumni Center. This adjacent property has reduced the site's historic integrity west of the building. Nevertheless, the Alumni Center is barely perceptible from the primary eastern approach to the auditorium. The building's design, materials, and characteristics remain virtually unchanged. Although some materials have been replaced with modern counterparts and despite some interior finish changes, the alterations have allowed the building to continue its original function as an auditorium for the performing arts through decades of technological advancements and continual use. The Chester Fritz Auditorium has been credited as being "the finest facility of its kind from Minneapolis to the West Coast." The changes have allowed the building to continue to meet performers' changing technological needs, and interior finishes updates have maintained the comfort and safety of the building's patrons.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

EDUCATION

ENTERTAINMENT/ RECREATION

PERFORMING ARTS

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1972

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1968–1970: Architectural Design

1970–1972: Construction

October 12, 1972: Dedication

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Architect: Myron Denbrook of Wells, Denbrook, Adams, Inc.

Acoustical consultant: R. C. Coffeen and Associates

Consulting engineers: Loos and Traeholt; Engineering Associates P.C.

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Chester Fritz Auditorium, completed in 1972 at the University of North Dakota, is an example of late-Modernist architecture constructed during a boom in higher education following World War II. It was built during societal changes that were reflected in shifts in education for the arts and humanities, as well as changes in entertainment and the performing arts. Myron Denbrook, a regionally prominent architect, designed the building and employed distinctive construction methods using precast concrete panel technology. Robert C. Coffeen, the acoustical consultant, is credited with creating a space known for its superior acoustics. The Chester Fritz Auditorium meets the requirements for nomination under Criterion A for its association with events that have made significant contributions to the broad patterns of history in the area of education, entertainment, and the arts. In addition, the auditorium is locally significant under Criterion C for the building's distinctive architecture as the work of a distinguished master in the field of architecture and for its construction methods characteristic of the late-Modernist movement.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

## HISTORIC CONTEXT

Grand Forks, situated in the northern part of the Red River Valley, was among the most active boomtowns in the Dakota Territory and the Northwest at the end of the nineteenth century. Fueled by railroad expansion and agricultural opportunities, early Grand Forks rapidly developed in the 1880s. With some deft political maneuvering, George H. Walsh, a member of the Dakota Territorial Council, wrote and introduced legislation in 1883 that urged for the establishment of a university in Grand Forks. Walsh submitted to the Dakota Territorial Legislature "A Bill for an Act Locating the University of North Dakota at Grand Forks..." so named in anticipation of the division of the territory. It was the first time the term "North Dakota" was used, as statehood was not achieved for another six years. In 1884, the University opened its doors on twenty acres of land donated by William Budge (approximately two miles west of the original settlement of Grand Forks). It became the first territorial institution established in the northern half of the Dakota Territory.

Starting with a single building on the windswept prairie, the "Main" building (renamed Merrifield Hall in 1912 and "Old Main" in 1930) served many purposes. It contained all recitation rooms, laboratories, the campus library, offices, and student housing. Despite administrative difficulties and physical limitations experienced in the first year, the University continued to advance its progress into the summer of 1885 under the direction of its President, William M. Blackburn (1884–1885).

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The late 1880s and early 1890s saw the American economy decline precipitously. Nevertheless, the University survived the setbacks and continued firmly setting its roots under the direction of the second University President, Homer B. Sprague (1887–1891). Main was repaired after a windstorm in June 1887 significantly damaged the building. A new dormitory was constructed in 1887, enrollment increased, and the first graduating class of six women and two men celebrated the first commencement in 1889. 1890 was marked by general improvements and progress, including the additions of the first University telephone, a weather station, and a post office.

Despite the noted progress, significant advancements at the University of North Dakota were slow due to the economic depressions of the late 1880s and 1893 and hardships at the fledgling institution. When the damages to the sole campus building occurred in the 1887 storm, it sparked debates about abandoning the University site for a location closer to town. Opponents of the University proposed reconsidering Grand Forks as the location for the state institution, instead favoring a more central location as North Dakota was nearing statehood. Other regional educational institutions were also established between 1888 and 1890, including the Congregational College at Fargo, Teachers Colleges (then called “Normal Schools”) in Valley City and Mayville, and a new Agricultural College at Fargo. These new colleges enticed prospective students to study elsewhere and competed for admissions reducing anticipated enrollments at the University of North Dakota.

The Panic of 1893 caught the fledgling state unprepared for an economic dip, and state institutions were identified as a place to begin cutting expenditures. The University of North Dakota experienced a period of “financial starvation that was well-nigh fatal.”<sup>3</sup> The University faced such economic adversity that a special mill levy for higher education, enacted by the legislature of 1899, and local fundraising efforts are credited with providing the funding needed to keep the University running.

Surviving nearly a decade of financial uncertainty, the University began an upward trend in 1896 as higher education flourished nationally and North Dakota entered a second boom in settlement of the region. Although admissions had slowed in the early 1890s, enrollments continued to increase. The strong enrollments were partly due to the ties the University had established with Minnesota and North Dakota public school systems. University President Webster Merrifield (1891–1909) also worked with the state of North Dakota to set standard procedures and curricula for state high schools so students would be prepared for direct admissions into the University system, reducing the need for preparatory courses. By the end of the 1890s, no other educational institution in the state was so thoroughly and directly tied to the public school system. The University of North Dakota evolved from a small liberal arts college and preparatory school into a proper university with over a hundred students by the decade's end.

In 1899, the campus began to expand under Merrifield's leadership, with construction continuing through the first decade of the 1900s. The North Dakota Legislature enacted a mill

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<sup>3</sup> Louis G. Geiger, *University of the Northern Plains: a History of the University of North Dakota, 1883-1958* (UND Publications, 1958), 100.

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levy in 1899 to support the University, providing it with more income. Consequently, there was rapid growth in buildings, equipment, professors, and students. This extensive building program and the addition of adjacent land east and west of the campus necessitated the first campus-led plans. In 1905, C.B. Waldron, a botanist from the Agricultural College at Fargo, designed a landscape plan for the campus. In 1907, Patton and Miller, an architecture firm from Chicago, was employed to prepare a long-term master plan for building placement on the entire campus. Although this plan was never implemented, concepts from this initial plan were preserved and included in future schemes.

The University of North Dakota and the neighboring Wesley College had strong ties. Wesley College, initially known as Red River Valley University, was renamed when the Methodist liberal arts school moved its campus from Wahpeton to Grand Forks in 1906. The two institutions quickly benefitted from their proximity. The cooperative program between the University of North Dakota and Wesley College developed a well-rounded curriculum for students of both educational facilities. Wesley College emphasized the study of religion and provided courses state funds did not support at the University of North Dakota, including music, elocution/speech, and drama. In exchange, the University offered courses in traditional academic subjects to Wesley College students.

Following Merrifield's departure from the University of North Dakota in 1909, Frank McVey served as President until 1917. Although the building program slowed under McVey (only two buildings were constructed during his presidency), he continued the growth and professional development at the University. McVey reorganized and reformed the organization of many colleges and departments, raised faculty morale, encouraged research and publication by expanding graduate training, and established off-campus research facilities. As financial and political issues surrounding World War I arose, he led the institution guided by the belief that a university should serve the state.

By World War I, the University of North Dakota was considered well-established, with over one thousand students enrolled in the fall of 1919. However, there was functional disorder within the University because of coincidences of war, the influenza epidemic of 1918, changes in administration, and rapidly rising enrollments after the war. From 1918 to 1933, Thomas F. Kane served as the President. It was considered a period "marked by much expansion but little innovation or bold experimentation, in fact, [with] remarkably few deliberate changes in the general form or orientation of the University," as the institution regained organizational solidity.<sup>4</sup>

Construction at the University between 1918 and 1933 was considerable and was made possible by private and public funds. In 1922, landscape architects Arthur Nichols and Anthony Morell developed a master plan for the University. The scheme began to take shape under Kane's presidency by constructing new campus buildings as student enrollment doubled from 858 enrolled in the fall of 1918 to 1,826 students by 1929.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Geiger, *University of the Northern Plains*, 319.

<sup>5</sup> "UND Fall Semester Enrollment" in Fact Book 2020-2021 (University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND; University Analytics & Planning. 2020.)

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The Great Depression hit the University hard as state appropriations were cut with the worsening economy. A new University president, John C. West (1933–1954), inherited an institution facing financial uncertainty not unlike what it had met in the 1890s. Obstacles included public impressions of University ties to the state's political conservatives and faction-ridden faculty after President Kane's resignation in 1933. The Great Depression's impact on the student body was not immediately apparent as enrollments only declined gradually, holding relatively steady with a low of 1,580 students in 1933 and a pre-war high of 1,960 in 1939.<sup>6</sup>

With a reputation as a skilled public relations facilitator, President West was able to secure federal relief program funding during the Depression years, and the University was able to build several new buildings. From 1939 to 1943, the National Youth Administration (NYA) offered a vocational education program in cooperation with the United States Office of Education to supplement the University of North Dakota's capacities for civilian training. The NYA constructed several buildings in 1941 and 1942 on University property for program trainees to use. The ownership of the NYA-built buildings' ownership was later turned over to the University of North Dakota after the NYA program was terminated.

As World War II approached, enrollments quickly declined because of the 1940 Selective Training and Service Act, which required all men between the ages of twenty-one and forty-five to register for the draft. Enrollment fell by about 200 from the record figure of 1,960 students in 1939. The decrease was hardly perceptible, but after Pearl Harbor, male students all but vanished from University admissions. Only 775 regular students enrolled in 1943–1944 and 866 in 1944–1945; most were women.<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, the University campus was bustling as war and defense training programs transformed the campus into a military camp. Programs included engineering defense training, Army Air Corps glider pilot training, a series of small contingents in civilian pilot training groups, Signal Corps, an Army Air Corps College Training Detachment program, an Army specialized engineering training program, as well as Army and Navy medical training groups and the United States Student Cadet Nurse Corps. The University provided academic training and housing to trainees while flight training was conducted at the Grand Forks Municipal Airport.<sup>8</sup> The programs hosted at the campus trained thousands of individuals for service in the war. The ability of the University of North Dakota to mobilize on such short notice for specialized training services was undoubtedly its most significant contribution to the war effort.

After the war and decades of hardship, a revival of optimism brought vigor and life back to the campus. Louis G. Geiger, a University of North Dakota history department faculty member and historian, described the opening day of the fall term of 1946 as "perhaps the most memorable occasion of its kind since that September day in 1884 when the University welcomed

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<sup>6</sup> Geiger, *University of the Northern Plains*, 389, "UND Fall Semester Enrollment" in *Fact Book 2020-2021*.

<sup>7</sup> Geiger, *University of the Northern Plains*, 401.

<sup>8</sup> Additional information can be found in the NRHP nomination for the "Administration Building for the City of Grand Forks at the Grand Forks Airport," NRHP Ref. 100005844, 2020.



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its first students.”<sup>9</sup> The University was only partially prepared for the sudden flood of the beneficiaries of the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944 (better known as the GI Bill). In 1946, veteran students at the University of North Dakota numbered 1,550, and the total enrollment was 2,802 exceeding the previous enrollment record set in 1939 by nearly a thousand. By 1947 enrollments soared to 3,077 students, a record that stood until 1955.<sup>10</sup> The GI Bill was the most sweeping educational legislation enacted by the federal government since the Morrill Land Grant Acts, and it catalyzed a building boom at universities nationwide.

Although the Board of Higher Education had received warning of the imminent enrollment boom after World War II and had set out to secure temporary buildings, the 1945 legislature provided little help to increase appropriations for the impending emergency. The temporary buildings the University of North Dakota acquired were predominantly used for student housing. The University, however, was also years behind in building and maintaining facilities of every kind. The antiquated facilities were essentially incapable of handling the 28 percent increase in enrollment in 1945.<sup>11</sup> Various temporary buildings were a quick and convenient solution to make space available for classrooms and offices in addition to solving housing demands.

The University of North Dakota’s campus had changed very little since the 1920s, but it rapidly transformed in the years following World War II. In the 1940s and 1950s, the University purchased and was bequeathed more land, including several individual lots near the campus. The additional land provided a means to accommodate future growth allowing the University to construct new educational and administrative buildings and extensive on-campus housing. Postwar development on the University of North Dakota campus commenced with the most significant building boom the campus had ever experienced. President West guided the institution’s expansion, first with temporary structures and later in “bricks and mortar” with permanent buildings.

In 1949, West again secured the services of Morell & Nichols to update the 1922 campus plan. The master plan’s ambitious building program maintained critical aspects of the original 1922 campus plan while planning for the rapid expansion needed to support the University’s increasing enrollment, evolving educational needs, and changing student body demographics. In addition to bonds issued for new buildings, including the Medical Science Building, Student Union Building, and U.S. Bureau of Mines (Lignite) research laboratory, the 1949 legislature also approved a record-breaking \$3,023,350 for educational services and maintenance, an increase of \$619,781.<sup>12</sup> President West told the Grand Forks Herald, “The board of education, budget board, and legislature, particularly the Grand Forks delegation, were sympathetic toward

<sup>9</sup> Geiger, *University of the Northern Plains*, 407.

<sup>10</sup> Geiger, *University of the Northern Plains*, 407, and “UND Fall Semester Enrollment” in Fact Book 2020-2021.

<sup>11</sup> James F. Vivian, “The Campus” in *A Century on the Northern Plains* (UND Publications, 1983), 147.

<sup>12</sup> “Record Sums for University.” *R.O.C. Messenger*. March 1949, Vol.2, No. 2., 8.

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the needs of the University. The appropriations were geared to the needs of the University and the ability of the state to meet these needs through taxation.”<sup>13</sup>

Between 1945 and 1954, eight major permanent buildings were constructed on campus, and numerous temporary buildings were utilized as classrooms, offices, and student housing. By the mid-1950s, growth had added 112 acres and 26 primary buildings to the campus.<sup>14</sup> The total valuation of the University property, estimated at around \$2,000,000 in 1939–1940, was \$17,000,000 by 1957.<sup>15</sup> In the spring of 1951, the University implemented the most extensive building program since its inception.<sup>16</sup> Significant changes to the campus also included renovations and extensions of existing buildings and the substantial loss of Woodworth Hall to a fire in 1949. Although buildings constructed during the University of North Dakota’s postwar building boom were spread across the campus, the first post-war construction was primarily concentrated east of the University’s existing facilities and south of University Avenue.<sup>17</sup> Expansion of permanent buildings began northwards from the original core campus in the 1950s.

Significant new construction had occurred during the second half of President West’s term, and the building boom continued under President George Starcher, who served from 1954 to 1971. The campus first began its westward expansion when hutments or “tin huts” (temporary student housing made from corrugated metal buildings) were relocated from the city-owned Park Village site to University-owned land across the English Coulee in 1955. The development was located south and west of the present-day Chester Fritz Auditorium and called West Green.<sup>18</sup> Permanent construction also started west of the coulee, beginning with the new President’s home, which was completed in 1956. Permanent married student housing units followed this in 1957 and 1959. However, the West Green area did not become the focal point of development until the mid-1960s. In 1958, Morell & Nichols finalized their campus plan to expand the campus west of the English Coulee. The campus grew immensely under Starcher’s direction into the 1960s as development continued in full swing. The total effect was revolutionary, completely transforming the University.

President Starcher requested a long-range physical development program for the University of North Dakota in August 1961. John B. Rork, a specialist in campus planning with the U.S. Office of Education, developed a plan intended to direct development until 2000 and beyond. Firstly, Rork suggested obtaining property at the maximum potential to avoid periods of land scarcity in the future. He predicted that Grand Forks and the adjacent area would experience an

<sup>13</sup> “Record Sums for University.” *R.O.C. Messenger*. March 1949, Vol.2, No. 2., 8.

<sup>14</sup> *Campus Master Plan*. (University of North Dakota. January 2016), 27.

<sup>15</sup> Geiger, *University of the Northern Plains*, 420.

<sup>16</sup> Vivian, “The Campus” in *A Century on the Northern Plains* (1983), 148.

<sup>17</sup> Exceptions to this typical pattern of expansion are the Walsh Complex dormitory cluster, located north of University Avenue, and areas of temporary campus housing that were placed at available open sites throughout campus and surrounding areas.

<sup>18</sup> Although initially intended to be temporary housing units, the West Green “tin huts” remained in use until they were dismantled between 1979 and 1981. After their removal, they were replaced with parking lots and the Manitoba, State, and Campus Road Apartment buildings. The West Green area included several areas/phases of residential development.

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increase in population from industrial expansion in the coming years, bringing more families and children into the city. Although enrollments at the University of Grand Forks had increased in the years following the war, he reported, "It is only logical to assume that proportionately more young people will be seeking admission when [the] national birth rate increased, which began approximately eighteen years ago."<sup>19</sup> Just before the first children from the baby boom era neared college age, he recommended that the University begin a gradual campus transformation. He recommended developing new facilities at a "rate compatible with the institution's needs and budget." He also suggested demolishing existing structures as they became no longer functional or presented health or fire hazards.

As forecasted, the 1960s—dubbed the "Soaring Sixties"—saw further development on campus as enrollment increased more than 50 percent. President Starcher set the tone of the decade by announcing early in 1960 an immediate construction program that produced three academic buildings and another dormitory within the following two years: Chester Fritz Library, Twamley Hall, Abbott Hall, and Walsh Hall. As Rork recommended, most academic buildings were developed around the established campus core. At the same time, the land west of the existing residential facilities was reserved and designated primarily for student housing construction. While new construction was a driving force in the 1960s, it was also marked by razing of some campus buildings that had served the University in its early years.

A new campus plan developed by Harland Bartholomew Associates was implemented in 1965, following many of Rork's planning recommendations. Campus development was modest at the existing campus. While the master plan proposed removing some aging buildings at the campus core (Macnie, Davis, Budge Halls, and the Library) to make way for new buildings, the plan primarily focused on expanding the campus west of the English Coulee. Also, at Rork's suggestion, Wesley College was purchased in 1965, comprised of the rectangular block between Oxford and Princeton Street and four buildings east of Princeton Street, extending the campus northward. This master plan was in place for thirty years. It guided development during years of rising student enrollments between the early 1970s and mid-1980s and supported accelerated construction. During the winter of 1972, the University of North Dakota experienced an unprecedented total of thirteen concurrent construction and renovation projects. Continued rising student enrollment at the time supported this rate of construction.

Development between the early 1970s and 1980s included the construction of Upson I & II, the Chester Fritz Auditorium, the Hughes Fine Art Building, the College of Nursing, Starcher Hall, Laird Core & Sample Library, John D. Odegard Hall, and Bryce Streibel Hall. This development formalized the campus's expansion, including an aerospace district to the west and a nursing college north of the academic Core Campus. Construction also continued with the married student housing project, including the development of several West Green phases.

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<sup>19</sup> John B. Rork, "A Suggested Long-Range Physical Facilities Development Program for the University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, North Dakota," Division of Higher Education, Office of Education, 2.

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Postwar construction at the University of North Dakota campus took place between 1945–1980. Although this time period extends beyond conventional definitions of postwar construction, 1980 is a representative point in which the University completed the final phase of the building program initiated in the postwar years. Construction continued on campus, and the University achieved a record for most concurrent construction projects in 1982, preparing for the centennial anniversary. By the University’s centennial anniversary in 1983, the campus had grown to 470 acres, including seventy-six major academic buildings and several support facilities.<sup>20</sup>

The upward trend in student enrollments has, more or less, continued from the postwar years to the present day. Construction has likewise continued, at a slower pace, while the demolition of buildings has increased in recent years. Campus planning has continued, looking towards the future, with a master plan developed in 1994 by Johnson & Laffen Architects Ltd. and Schoen Associates, Inc. and in 2016 by Hay Dobbs Architecture, Planning, and Interiors Firm. The most recent 2018 Academic Master Plan Report includes a long-term physical space planning effort led by Sasaki, an interdisciplinary design firm. The plan supports renovating strategic and historical assets contributing to the campus character and evaluates buildings where the deferred maintenance liability was too significant to overcome. This 2018 plan revealed that the University of North Dakota has a supply of space above current demand and aims for consolidation of space on campus.

Today’s 521-acre campus is in a city setting, located within the City of Grand Forks, which has grown considerably to the west and south, developing around the University. From its humble start, the University of North Dakota grew from a single building on the open prairie to a campus encompassing 186 buildings in 2020 (this number has dropped from 244 in 2015/2016).<sup>21</sup> The University has continually evolved by remodeling and expanding its existing buildings, demolishing old buildings and constructing new buildings, and rerouting campus roads to facilitate new planning. Although the campus has undergone recent changes as part of development plans, the Core Campus, east of the English Coulee, still includes many historic buildings and open spaces contributing to the National Register’s University of North Dakota Historic District. The University’s midcentury-developed buildings, primarily located west of the English Coulee (including the Chester Fritz Auditorium), have only recently attained the customary fifty-year mark commonly observed in historic preservation. Although immediately adjacent to the University of North Dakota Historic District’s boundary and constructed after the District’s period of significance, the Chester Fritz Auditorium meets the requirements for individual National Register listing and, thus, is eligible as a contributing resource.

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<sup>20</sup> Sasaki, *Academic Master Plan Report* (University of North Dakota. April 2018) 22.

<sup>21</sup> University of North Dakota. (*Quick Facts 2020–2021*. Grand Forks, ND; Division of Marketing & Communications, 2020). Demolition of several campus buildings has continued through 2023 and additional buildings are slated for future demolition.

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## A BOOM IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Like many other American higher education institutions that started in the late 1800s to early 1900s, the University of North Dakota faced insufficient funding and hardships in its early years. Nevertheless, it endured several economic adversities and two world wars, with student enrollments gradually increasing. Following World War II, prosperity was generated in the region, bringing optimism and population growth to Grand Forks. Nationwide, dramatically changing social structures increased the demand for higher education. Higher education in America enjoyed a quarter-century of good fortune and growth so heady that journalists and historians have come to call it the “Golden Age.”

During World War II, the nation’s university systems were utilized to mobilize training for the military. Working on such short notice for specialized training services and related research endeavors signaled the maturity of academic science in the United States. Because the nation’s universities had successfully responded during the crisis of World War II, a foundation was paved for future partnerships between the federal government and universities, forever transforming American higher education.

As a result, but virtually as an afterthought, American colleges and universities became unwitting partners in postwar federal policies. After the war, President Franklin D. Roosevelt faced adjusting wartime production to the peacetime economy, diverting veterans from returning to their homes without jobs or prospects, and keeping millions of veterans from flooding the job market at one time. The Servicemen’s Readjustment Act or “GI Bill” (Public Law 346, 78th Congress, June 22, 1944) provided veterans access to education and a subsistence allowance for veterans while enrolled.

Initially, few expected much of the government’s college plan, but by the fall of 1945, eighty-eight thousand veterans had applied and were accepted. By 1946, the number exceeded one million, almost doubling the size of the nation’s student population. In the peak year of 1947, veterans accounted for 49 percent of college admissions. Between 1940 to 1950, national student enrollments ballooned nearly 80 percent to 2.7 million. By 1949, about 15 percent of the nation’s college-age population—eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds—were enrolled in colleges (up from 9 percent at the end of the 1930s).<sup>22</sup> When the benefits of the original GI Bill ended on July 25, 1956, 7.8 million, almost half of the country’s sixteen million World War II veterans, had taken advantage of this educational opportunity.<sup>23</sup>

Although GI enrollment numbers at the University of North Dakota did not reach the quantities of universities seen in more populated areas, their presence was evident since they accounted for a higher percentage of the student body than other prominent universities. At the University of North Dakota, war veterans alone numbered 1,550 for the fall term of 1946, and

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<sup>22</sup> Thomas D. Snyder, *120 years of American education: a statistical portrait*. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, National Center for Education Statistics, 1993), 66.

<sup>23</sup> “Born of Controversy: The GI Bill of Rights.” U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

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the total enrollment was 2,802.<sup>24</sup> With little aberration, enrollments continued to grow. Within a decade, the enrollment had increased by a thousand to 3,802 in 1956.<sup>25</sup> The boom in student enrollment signaled a massive need for laboratories, classrooms, and dormitories. Although development started with hastily built, temporary, and modest structures across nearly all of the nation's campuses, the amount of construction also signaled the start of unprecedented prosperity. After the war, North Dakota state and local economies, heavily dependent on agriculture, entered an era of affluence.

The City of Grand Forks likewise entered an era of boom years and experienced rapid postwar growth with the population shift. The surrounding agricultural economic base was supported by good commodity prices for grain, potato, and sugar beets, and bountiful harvests bolstered the city and its development. In 1946, the County of Grand Forks ranked thirty-seventh in the nation in family buying income.<sup>26</sup> The population exploded in the city, sparking the greatest building boom of the century as Grand Forks grew at an astounding rate. The City of Grand Forks population increased over 32 percent from 20,228 in 1940 to 26,836 by 1950.<sup>27</sup> The population increased an additional 28 percent by 1960 to 34,451. By 1970, the city had nearly doubled its population from 1940 to almost 40,000. This sustained growth continued unabated through the 1980s.

During these postwar years, state and federal support increasingly fostered the University of North Dakota and higher education institutions nationwide. State legislators across the country embraced the principles of the federal education bill and directed funds to state universities. North Dakota was bolstered by greatly enhanced budgets owing to postwar prosperity. State higher education leaders demanded that the North Dakota legislature invest more significantly in the state's colleges and universities since statewide enrollments reached record heights. There were 7,800 students statewide by the fall of 1950, increasing to 14,000 by 1961.<sup>28</sup> In the decade after 1947, the state legislature appropriated funding to construct twenty major building projects on campuses throughout the state.

The rapid increase in the availability of education, a booming population in Grand Forks, and the general sense of urgency experienced in the early postwar years brought a feeling of optimism and well-being to the campus that had been missing for nearly a generation. The 1947 *Dacotah* yearbook quoted University President John C. West stating:

*Never have opportunities been so plentiful and never have dangers been so great...it is on your shoulders, the shoulders of the leaders and rulers of tomorrow, that we rest our faith in the future... We look to you now in peace as we looked to you in war...yours was*

<sup>24</sup>Geiger, *University of the Northern Plains*, 407, and "UND Fall Semester Enrollment" in Fact Book 2020-2021.

<sup>25</sup> "UND Fall Semester Enrollment" in Fact Book 2020-2021.

<sup>26</sup> D. Jerome Tweton, *Grand Forks A Pictorial History*. 2nd ed. (Virginia Beach, VA. Donning Company Publishers. 2005), 136.

<sup>27</sup> Total Population for North Dakota Cities: 1920 to 2000.

<sup>28</sup> Lester F. Goodchild, Richard W. Jonsen, Patty Limerick, and David A. Longanecker, eds. *Higher Education in the American West: Regional History and State Contexts*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, 119.

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*a victory in war; may it be the supreme victory in peace...It is with a feeling of great security, that I salute the young people on the campus...the pride of the present and the hope of years to come.*

West spoke to the veterans in his address—a new kind of student. Older than traditional college students, worldly and experienced from their time in service, and easily identifiable by the wardrobes that included articles of military clothing, the veteran students were regarded as pragmatic, hardworking, and eager to complete their degrees.<sup>29</sup> The new student body nationwide resulted in a shift in social conscience after World War II that dramatically changed the culture of the University. The GIs precipitated the notion that young adults should have the opportunity for higher education. The economic demands of the changing workforce in America soon reflected this. As the economy expanded in the years following the war, more students sought higher education. A college education quickly became considered a prerequisite for success, and many middle-class families expected their children to attend college.

The veteran remained a crucial element of the campus population for over a decade. At the University of North Dakota, there were never fewer than a thousand veterans enrolled (making up at least a third of the student body) until 1950–1951. The last World War II veteran beneficiary of the GI Bill at the University of North Dakota was enrolled in the 1957–1958 school year. The Korean War veterans, benefiting from a similar bill (Public Law 550), appeared on campus in 1952–1953; in 1956, the peak year for this group, there were 888 enrolled.<sup>30</sup>

Even as veteran student enrollments declined, enrollments at the University of North Dakota continued to increase into the 1950s and 1960s. During this time, significant developments in post-secondary education occurred throughout the country. Rising birth rates, increased migration into some states, and deliberate extensions of college admissions fueled dramatic growth nationwide. Higher education became a national interest.

America's colleges and universities shifted to providing mass access to higher education to more of the nation's youth. As large numbers of young people chose to pursue higher education, colleges across the United States likewise expanded to meet the growing demand. College enrollment rose nationally by 49 percent in the 1950s and 120 percent in the 1960s. By 1969, college enrollment was as large as 35 percent of the eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds in the country.<sup>31</sup> Although the 1970s experienced slower growth, enrollments continued to rise by 45 percent before slowing to only a 17 percent increase during the 1980s. As the student populations of universities grew throughout the country, extensive building programs reshaped the nation's campuses to support the growing enrollments.

By the 1950s, state governments—setting a nationwide trend without a national policy—and local policies helped make a college education reasonably affordable and accessible to a substantial proportion of the country's population. Before the mid-1960s, the federal government did not provide substantial student financial aid programs. Still, it contributed to the expansion of

<sup>29</sup> John R. Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 266.

<sup>30</sup> Geiger, *University of the Northern Plains*, 410.

<sup>31</sup> Snyder, *120 years of American education: a statistical portrait*, 66.

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universities by offering federal research grants and sponsoring economic development at increasingly generous amounts from the late 1950s into the 1960s. World War II's scientific and technological legacies profoundly and permanently affected industrialization and commercialization in postwar America and, thus, higher education, particularly with advancements in surgery and medicine, computer technologies, meteorology, and aviation.

In 1965, the federal government began guaranteeing student loans provided by banks and non-profit lenders and created grant opportunities for low-income students. The federally insured loans, a federal work-study program, scholarships, veteran benefits, and grants increased the availability of student financial assistance. By 1970, a little over 60 percent of students at the University of North Dakota received some form of financial aid, making tuition fees more feasible for greater numbers of students.<sup>32</sup> The funding also increased opportunities for previously disadvantaged minorities to seek higher education.

In the decades after World War II, increasing urbanization, industrialization, new and developing technologies, and expanded communication demanded a highly trained workforce. The University of North Dakota's academic catalogs became more specialized. Existing study programs were revitalized, and new programs were offered to students, including management, occupational therapy, and industrial arts. New graduate programs emerged, and existing ones attracted more students. The expansion of graduate and doctoral programs in the late 1940s further advanced the potential of future generations of professors for a wide range of institutions and training for new industries. By 1983, the University of North Dakota had over 11,000 students who chose from over 130 programs of study. The upward trend in student enrollments at the University of North Dakota has, more or less, continued from the postwar years to a peak of 15,250 students in 2012. These changes that began after World War II reflect the changing panorama of American higher education. Within 50 years, the number of Americans with advanced degrees rose nearly 20 percent.

The postwar years were a period of intense reappraisal of American values in nearly every arena of human activity. Political, social, economic, and cultural forces created an atmosphere in which even the most staunchly conservative institutions could not remain immune to the winds of change. The reaction to the period's political, social, and intellectual upheavals resulted in significant changes in arts education philosophies in the 1950s and 1960s. The increased interest in education and expansion of college curriculums also extended to music and arts education. Whereas art and music classes had been used to complement traditional courses in the past, music, musicology, dramatic art, and fine arts became eligible programs of study by the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) in 1958.<sup>33</sup> In 1959, the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and the National Education Association (NEA) reported supporting the inclusion of the arts alongside other important subjects like math, history, and science.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas W. Howard, "Students" in *A Century on the Northern Plains* (UND Publications, 1983), 80.

<sup>33</sup> John S. Diekhoff, *NDEA and Modern Foreign Languages*, (Modern Language Association of America, New York, August 1965), 53.



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At this time, there was a critical need for unifying music education. School music programs were also criticized for not having kept pace with 20th-century musical developments. Music education was considered unique among traditional subjects and required changes and shifts of emphasis in the curriculum. The development of music programs was formed around three core philosophies: the need for aesthetic education, which was not concerned with the functional value of music but rather the value of music itself; praxialism, which emphasized music involvement rather than just listening; and conceptual or utilitarian education which established a basis for development in all subject areas with music education as a practical practice. By the end of the 1960s, music educators expanded music curricula from all periods, styles, forms, and cultures to be included in the curriculum.

Artist training and the study of contemporary art at colleges and universities also became an increasingly academic and intellectual field postwar. Prior to World War II, artists did not need a college degree. With the boom in postsecondary education, a Bachelor of Fine Arts and then a Master of Fine Arts became recommended degrees to be a professional artist. In 1962, the United States Office of Education established its Cultural Affairs Branch, providing important support for arts education. In 1965, the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act was created to promote progress and scholarship in the humanities and the arts in the United States. However, the availability of theater, drama, and dance instruction lagged considerably behind that of music and visual arts.

The GI Bill and subsequent acts funding the arts facilitated the passage of increased courses in dance, theatre, fine art, creative writing, and related humanities and social sciences courses in American universities and colleges. In 1960, the University of North Dakota became the first and only institution of higher education in North Dakota to develop a graduate program in music. Two degrees were designed for the program: The Master of Education for individuals studying music education; and the Master of Arts for individuals wishing to improve performance skills. In 1971, the College of Fine Arts was created at the University, the first and only one in the state at the time and one of very few in the upper Midwest. The University's theatre group split from the Speech Department to form the Department of Theatre Arts under the new college.

The creation of a College of Fine Arts created the need for facilities to house the new college and its departments. Plans initially called for a new facility that would be large enough to hold Theatre, Music, and Visual Arts in addition to office space for the Dean and for operational support of the college. At the time, the Theatre program was already in the Burtness Theatre building with its offices in Merrifield Hall. At the same time, Music was being housed in the Education Building, which was cramped for space and had no permanent facilities. It was decided to build only for Music and Visual Arts with the anticipation that funding would be found in the future for an addition to accommodate Theatre Department. The Hughes Fine Arts Center was dedicated in October 1974.

Performances are considered a fundamental part of any performing arts or music education. These events allow students to exhibit the work they have practiced each semester, record progress while developing their technical skills, and communicate the creative process. Performances enable students to put their skills to the test and receive feedback that aids in

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identifying areas to improve and strategies for improving techniques to become confident in their abilities. Music and theatrical performances are also essential for sharing the arts with peers and the general public in an interactive setting. Although performances are a vital component of a performing arts education, the University lacked a dedicated space for performances until the 1960s when the Burtness Theatre was constructed. As performances and events grew in popularity and drew larger crowds, recitals and concerts of the music department and some Theatre performances were moved to the Chester Fritz Auditorium.

## ENTERTAINMENT & PERFORMING ARTS FOR A CHANGING SOCIETY

In 1965, University of North Dakota alum Chester Fritz gave the University of North Dakota one million dollars towards constructing an auditorium on campus. Fritz envisioned a space that would become “a culture center for the entire state.” It would become a place for listening, enhancing learning, and uplifting the human spirit. Fritz said, “It is my hope that this building will be an additional means by which future students at my Alma Mater may gain clearer visions of truth and beauty and integrity; and that the added opportunities for weighing comparative values will inspire listening students to rise to higher planes of world-understanding, purpose, and stewardship.”<sup>34</sup>

Chester Fritz (1892–1983) was born in Buxton, North Dakota, and began his education in a rural one-room school in Traill County. His family moved to Fargo in 1898, where he continued his grade-school education. Fritz was the only surviving child of parents Charles and Anne (Belanger) Fritz. After Charles was permanently disabled in a farm accident in 1902, Chester’s mother, Anne, had to take on work as a clerk and bookkeeper. Circumstances for the family were meager. Chester Fritz became a voracious reader, and when the Fargo Carnegie Public Library opened in January of 1903, Fritz began visiting daily, where he read tales of success attained through self-discipline and virtue. These instilled a belief that he could prosper through his determination, despite undesirable living conditions or circumstances.

After Anne Fritz left the family in February 1905, neither seen nor heard from again, Chester Fritz moved to Lidgerwood, North Dakota. He lived with his mother’s sister, Kathrine Belanger Macdonald (a.k.a. Katherine Tiffany after she married Orin Edward Tiffany in 1925), the principal of Lidgerwood High School, and her husband Neil C. Macdonald, who was Superintendent of Schools in Lidgerwood. They provided an active and scholastic environment for Chester. While in Lidgerwood, he paid his boarding fees by working odd jobs while attending school. He graduated as valedictorian of his class from Lidgerwood High School in 1908, completing his four-year degree in three years. After attending the University of North Dakota, he studied one year of law and completed his B.A. in Economics in 1914 at the University of Washington.

Immediately upon his graduation, Fritz was employed by the Fisher Flouring Mills Company in Seattle. After working in the testing laboratory and the main office, the company sent him to

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<sup>34</sup> Chuck Haga, ed. *Chester Fritz Auditorium* (University of North Dakota: University Press, 1972).

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work in Hong Kong as an exporter in the spring of 1915. He worked under the guidance of Charles E. Richardson, a very successful foreign trader. He maintained headquarters in China for thirty-four years, working in foreign exchange in the metals industry, international investment, and private banking.

A North Dakota boy who rose to prominence in the metal trade and international finance, Chester Fritz never severed his roots. His generosity in giving back to the University of North Dakota began after attending an alumni dinner in New York City in November 1950 when Fritz sent a check for \$10,000 to the University of North Dakota Development Fund. This was the first action in which Fritz would, in his own words, "repay the state of North Dakota" for what it had given him. Fritz returned to the University of North Dakota in 1951 to receive an honorary Doctor of Laws degree. A million-dollar gift in 1958 funded the construction of a new library named in his honor. He revisited the campus in 1961 to participate in the dedication of the Chester Fritz Library. Fritz considered his return to the University of North Dakota for the dedication of the library his "finest hour." In his remarks at the dedication on October 13, 1961, he stated that he preferred to donate while he was still alive or "with a warm hand."<sup>35</sup>

Less than a year after the library's dedication, Katherine Tiffany, Fritz's aunt, wrote to her nephew about her hope for another building on campus.<sup>36</sup> She predicted, "It would not be total surprise [for] me to read of another stately building with this inscription: Chester Fritz Auditorium." On May 28, 1965, in a letter to President Starcher, Fritz offered one million dollars toward the "construction of a distinctive auditorium" on the University's campus. An auditorium symbolized the heart of the University to Fritz, which would become a place to enhance the learning process. In the letter, he noted, "There is no building in which large numbers of students, faculty, and staff can listen appreciatively to the great dramas, oratorios, operas, musical concerts, artist recitals, or lectures by outstanding contemporary thinkers."<sup>37</sup> Although citizens were attracted to the campus as a center of cultural activities for theatre, music, and dance from the earliest years of the University of North Dakota, it took many years for the University to have a facility to hold sizeable events and performances on campus.

Many young men and women in northeast North Dakota and northwest Minnesota grew up on rural homesteads in the late 1800s and early 1900s, receiving minimal exposure to the

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<sup>35</sup> Between 1950 and 1969, Fritz donated more than \$2.25 million to the University of North Dakota. These donations helped to finance the Chester Fritz Scholarship Fund (1956), the Chester Fritz Library (1958), the Chester Fritz Auditorium (1965), the Kathrine B. Tiffany Scholarship Fund (1969), and Chester Fritz Distinguished Professorships. The scholarship endowment funds are still available today, and the library and auditorium remain in use. Fritz's fondness for the University of North Dakota was evident in his financial support and enthusiasm for his Alma Mater.

<sup>36</sup> Kathrine Tiffany maintained a very close relationship with and interest in the University of North Dakota. She and President George Starcher corresponded at length over funding and construction of the Chester Fritz Library, the Chester Fritz Auditorium, and other improvements at the University of North Dakota.

<sup>37</sup> Chester Fritz and Dan Rylance, "Ever Westward to the Far East: the Story of Chester Fritz" (1982, UND Publications), 208.

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performing arts. The performances held at the University of North Dakota allowed students and the surrounding community to experience the performing arts. With modest beginnings, a list of organizations and events grew involving lectures, music, theatre, and dance to contribute significantly to the University and community's cultural climate.

Music was an early component of the University's curriculum since its creation in 1883 that became integral to its Liberal Arts education. Initially, the main objective of music education at the University was to instruct individuals planning to become school teachers in singing. The first formal music instructor, Mrs. Cora Eaton-Smith, began teaching in 1884. Historians report that early students "yearned for the mark of culture and accomplishment represented in the ability to play a musical instrument."<sup>38</sup> President Merrifield appointed George Hodge as head of a music conservatory in 1891. That year over 190 students were enrolled in three areas of study, including piano or organ, voice, and orchestra.<sup>39</sup> Additional early music activities included a military band, a University band, a University orchestra, small choral groups, a chapel choir, and a University choir. Students also organized several glee clubs and a mandolin club to satisfy the need for creative outlets. When Wesley College moved to Grand Forks in 1906, most music instruction shifted to being provided at Wesley College, with only classroom music courses offered at the University of North Dakota. The reciprocal relationship between music education at Wesley College and the University of North Dakota continued until 1952 when the University established a Department of Music.

The earliest theatrical productions were class plays and presentations performed as social events and fundraisers. Speech and drama courses were provided at Wesley College until the University absorbed these into its curriculum with the creation of the Department of Speech in 1926. Theatre at the University of North Dakota continued under the auspices of the Speech Department until the formation of the Theatre Arts Department in 1971.

The earliest documented production at the University was *All for A Man*, produced in 1902 as the class play for the season. When Harvard-educated Frederick Koch joined the faculty in 1905, he took over directing the class plays. The Sock and Buskin Society, formed in 1910 under Koch's direction, was the first dedicated theatre program at the University of North Dakota, comprised of faculty and students. A young Chester Fritz was among the students attracted to this dramatic society. Koch was reported to be "a character, but a man of vision, filled with a zeal to awaken North Dakota students to an appreciation of serious drama."<sup>40</sup> President McVey provided institutional support for the club and thought such a theatre would be good public relations for the University. Koch created a "communal theatre movement" at the University that

<sup>38</sup> Jacobson, ed., *Chester Fritz Auditorium*, 9.

<sup>39</sup> Sharon Ellingson, "Music," (*UND Departmental Histories*, 1983.), 1. Enrollment at the University of North Dakota was 37 students in 1891. Students of the music conservatory included University students, high school students, and others not enrolled at the University. The conservatory closed after being open for a little over a year, attributed to insufficient space for the large enrollment and because a replacement could not be found after George Hodge resigned.

<sup>40</sup> Jacobson, ed., *Chester Fritz Auditorium*, 8.

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worked under the premise that everyone, regardless of social rank, had a story to tell and that a collective group could serve as a play's author, producer, and performer.

In February 1910, the club considered creating an outdoor theatre on the banks of the English Coulee to the south and west of the Main building. One side of the coulee was banked high, providing ideal seating for the audience, watching the action unfold on the low, gradually sloping opposite bank. Fritz was cast in Sock and Buskin's first production of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* in 1910. More than 400 people witnessed the premier performance of the University's theatre group on June 13, 1910, credited as the first open-air production ever staged in North Dakota.<sup>41</sup> The site later became known as Bankside Theatre, an open-air venue with the stream forming a natural barrier between the audience and the stage. The open-air Bankside Theatre between present-day Smith Hall and the Chester Fritz Auditorium was the University's earliest dedicated venue to entertain students and the community. It was used for about forty years, but unpredictable weather caused it to decline in popularity. By 1950, it was mostly abandoned.

Other performance groups gained regard at the University, including the May Fete, an annual feature of the women's physical education department created in 1909, which grew into a celebrated dance-drama attracting an estimated 5,000 to the Bankside Theatre in 1926. Flickertail Follies, a student variety show, debuted to a full house at the Orpheum Theatre in downtown Grand Forks in 1925.

Maxwell Anderson was among the early students involved in the Sock and Buskin performances and later became a prolific playwright and Pulitzer Prize winner. In 1958 he penned *Love Letter to a University* on the occasion of the University's 75th anniversary, noting his "grateful appreciation to my alma mater, thanking it for being there when I needed it so badly, and for supplying hope to the current crop of youngsters as they come to it from the windy plains."<sup>42</sup> He remarked that respecting the "life of the mind" of those interested in creating beauty was "perhaps the most important cultural influence a university can have." Recollections of the early Sock and Buskin (renamed the Dakota Playmakers in 1917), May Fete, and Flickertail Follies illustrate the University's long interest in the arts and its strong tradition of sharing campus cultural activities with citizens from miles around.

The first University building to include a dedicated area serving as an auditorium was the Teachers College Building, built in 1910 and later renamed Woodworth Hall. Before this, the basement of Budge Hall (1899) was said to have been used as an auditorium, among other various uses. Woodworth Hall contained a lecture hall with a 300-seat auditorium that became the home for University performances for nearly 40 years until the building was destroyed by a fire in 1949. Performance groups also used various venues (especially after the loss of Woodworth Hall), performing at several sites located throughout Grand Forks, including the Metropolitan Opera House, Central High School, St. Michaels Youth Center, Orpheum Theatre,

<sup>41</sup> Chester and Rylance, "Ever Westward to the Far East: the Story of Chester Fritz," 21.

<sup>42</sup> Maxwell Anderson, *Love Letter To A University*, (Art & Design Study Collection, UND Art Collections Repository, 1958).

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Grand Forks Auditorium, University of North Dakota Armory, States Theatre, Masonic Temple, and other various small locales. By the 1950s, most performances were centered at the West Elementary School Auditorium (combined with the gymnasium) located across from University Park.

The University's need for a large auditorium was first expressed just after World War I. Officials hoped to erect a 3,000-seat auditorium at an anticipated cost of \$100,000 to \$150,000, but the drive to raise funds was abandoned after failing to generate support. Three decades after the University first expressed the need for a dedicated auditorium, President Starcher gave his inaugural address in 1955, citing again the necessity of an auditorium as one of the University's most critical needs.

President Starcher's goals for the institution were first published in a 1955 University statement titled "To Grow Toward Greatness." Funded by the Campbell Foundation, the brochure emphasized Starcher's ideas for a great University and challenged alumni members to "think big." The brochure featured four major goals: cultural and intellectual stimulation, research, general needs, and physical plant. To meet these goals, Starcher proposed adding four buildings that would function as symbols of a greater university; an auditorium, a fine arts center, a library, and a chapel. In 1956, he elaborated, "An auditorium is needed to permit us to bring the entire student body together at one time, in one place, to hear lecturers, discussions, concerts, and other cultural programs."<sup>43</sup>

In 1961, Zoe Burtness donated \$100,000 to the University with a note to use it in a year or lose it.<sup>44</sup> The Burtness Theatre was designed quickly with a groundbreaking ceremony on June 1, 1962. Dedication of Burtness Theatre was held on April 28, 1963. The Burtness Theatre had a mainstage designed to seat 400 and a black box space, known as the Burtness Lab, seating 150. The venue is still in use on campus today.

While the Burtness Theatre provided a space for performances, discussions for a large auditorium space continued. The University of North Dakota alums in Chicago and New York discussed the need and ways to secure funds for the University to build an auditorium on the campus. Fritz's aunt, Katherine B. Tiffany, reported the discussion at the Chicago meetings directly to her nephew Chester Fritz. When Fritz visited the campus in 1961 for the dedication of the library, he expressed interest in the University's need for a place where large numbers could assemble to hear great music, drama, and lectures.

Fritz offered one million dollars toward the "construction of a distinctive auditorium" on the University's campus. As Starcher recalled, his contribution made it possible to secure additional funds to build a "truly great building." When President Starcher read the offer letter from Fritz to the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education on April 16, 1965, he was met with

<sup>43</sup> Jacobson, ed., *Chester Fritz Auditorium*, 14.

<sup>44</sup> Loren Liepold, "Theatre History at the University of North Dakota". (*UND Departmental Histories*, 2008), 9.

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immediate acceptance by the board, which passed a resolution of appreciation and directed the President to proceed with planning for the construction of the building.

Plans for building the auditorium soon became more complicated than those for the library Fritz had funded. Preliminary figures proved that about three million dollars would be required to complete the project, exceeding the one million gifted by Fritz. Delays in raising the additional funds also increased the cost, with the total bill eventually exceeding three million dollars. In addition to Fritz's contribution, the 1967 state legislature provided a matching one million appropriation. The remaining amount necessary to complete the auditorium came from private bequests, including \$300,000 from the Edmond A. Hughes Estate, \$700,000 from the Twamley Trust Fund, and lesser amounts from various sources.

Approval for the construction of the auditorium came from the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education on April 17, 1970, and the groundbreaking ceremony took place on June 26, 1970. Officials anticipated that major construction would be complete by March 1972, with the installation of the highly-technical sound system ready by June 1972.

After some setbacks, including a sheet metal workers' strike, the auditorium was finished and ready by October 1972. Formal dedication ceremonies for the Chester Fritz Auditorium were scheduled for October 12–14, 1972. The Chester Fritz Auditorium held its first event on October 12, 1972, with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra and Philharmonic Choir performing a dedicatory concert. Fritz was unable to return to the University for the building's dedication, hesitating to make the long journey at age seventy-nine. He also said he had nothing to say, having no desire to attempt duplication of his "finest hour" at the library's dedication. As a result, Mrs. Tiffany and President Starcher together drafted his formal remarks, which J. Lloyd Stone, Executive Vice-President of the Alumni Association, delivered.

The Chester Fritz Auditorium was planned in relation to existing and future facilities on the University campus. The auditorium was intended to complement those existing facilities and offer students and city residents a wide area of cultural enrichment and intellectual stimulation. In the early 1970s, when the Chester Fritz Auditorium was constructed, Grand Forks had grown to the second largest city in North Dakota, with over 40,000 residents. It was the primary retail center of a large and productive agricultural region. The prosperous region offered varied opportunities for cultural enrichment, including the Grand Forks Community Music Association-sponsored events with appearances by artists such as Robert Merrill and the Jacques Loussier Trio. The University, particularly the College of Fine Arts, became a leading component in the city's artistic endeavors. Its choral and instrumental groups, theatre organizations, and other performances fill the calendar year-round with various performances exhibiting the University's music and theater arts educational programs with student, faculty, and guest performances.

Designed for multi-purpose use by an increasingly complex and wide-ranging society, the auditorium's modern, spacious quarters were intended for a variety of activities, including lecturers, 300 voice choruses, jazz ensembles, full symphony orchestras, convention proceedings, and even motion pictures. It would become an integral part of the University's

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intellectual environment, and it was envisioned as “a combination of [an] art gallery, library and museum, offering the art of dance, the literature of theatre, and the portrayal of past societies as a basis for comprehension of today’s world.”<sup>45</sup> Over the years, the diversity of events held at the venue has offered opportunities to students, faculty, alums, and the general public.

Venues for entertainment became important community civic projects, with towns and cities constructing large assembly halls and auditoriums during the Depression era and World War II. During World War II, popular forms of entertainment were used to keep citizens and the military population entertained, informed about the war effort, and motivated. These community gathering spaces usually included large open spaces for various ceremonial purposes and performances. Some served multiple functions, such as the commonplace gymnasium model equipped with a stage, becoming the scene of many events, not just sports. Efforts to rebuild the civilization’s cultural fabric after the devastation of World War II included rethinking the role of arts, music, and theatre in the new society.

Arts and entertainment in the two decades following World War II showed both continuity and change as an explosion in medium, accessibility, and style, increasing interest in the arts as a whole. By the 1960s, America had been involved in some sort of military conflict for nearly three decades. World War II (1939–45), the Cold War (1945–91), the Korean War (1950–53), and the Vietnam War (1954–75) influenced the way Americans perceived the world. The civil rights movement and the sexual revolution helped to expand participation in the arts, as growing numbers of African Americans and women contributed to artistic production. American society’s growing commercialism also deeply influenced the arts as the dissemination of music and the arts was channeled through America through the implementation of television, advertising, and more portable music technologies.

Rising prosperity also increased audiences for the performing arts. Musical theatre continued to thrive following a Broadway (and Off-Broadway) movement that began shortly after World War II. While musical revues had been popular since the late 1890s, the Golden Age of Broadway refined the musical play shortly after World War II. Several eminent classical musicians, including Leonard Bernstein and Aaron Copland, also crossed over into popular music to compose musicals. By the 1960s, the musicals confronted social issues directly, whereas earlier shows often glossed over serious social problems in the name of entertainment. As the content of musicals changed, sets and staging grew more complex, along with increased cast sizes and budgets. By the end of the decade, fewer musical songs were making their way onto radio playlists as the popularity of rock and roll music skyrocketed, and Broadway’s cultural influence declined.

With the advent of new technology, music became more accessible than ever, and musicians engaged in experimentation with all genres of music. Folk music became increasingly popular among intellectual and politically engaged young people, particularly on the expanding college campuses. Popularized by artists like Bob Dylan, Woody Guthrie, and Joan Baez, folk increased in commercial popularity and social significance. Social solidarity was a core ideal of the folk

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<sup>45</sup> Haga, ed., *Chester Fritz Auditorium*.



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scene, and it continued to be prominent even as music ventured in more experimental directions during the second half of the 1960s.

As social solidarity continued, counterculture beliefs simultaneously inspired and influenced the development of a unique self. In the second half of the 1960s, musicians began to approach rock as a means of experimentation and self-exploration, with some artists like Bob Dylan bridging between folk and rock music. Musicians were creating new forms of rock music that became popular among young people. Each genre shaped society's trajectory, from the British invasion of the Beatles to Motown's soulful melodies, from protest anthems to psychedelic rock. Rock music became an intellectual, emotional, and physical medium of social change. Various new genres and subgenres emerged in the 1960s and accumulated influence over the 1970s, including psychedelic rock, disco, punk rock, and new wave.

Just as popular music reflected the turbulence and uncertainty of the postwar years, traditional forms of music and the institutions around it were no exception. Classical music's former aesthetics were challenged, transformed, or simply disregarded. While some composers were still writing music in the tradition of late Romantic or Impressionism, others expanded the scope of what was regarded as classical music. Contemporary composers like Charles Ives engaged in systematic experimental music using techniques such as polytonality, polyrhythms, and quoting American musical sound and melodic themes. Minimal music, or minimalist music, developed as a subgenre of classical music associated with American composers like Philip Glass, Steve Reich, Terry Riley, and La Monte Young. Innovations in electronic music that encouraged listeners and composers to find value in sounds that may otherwise be taken for granted were spearheaded by classical composers such as Pauline Oliveros and Wendy Carlos.

Jazz likewise developed new improvisational styles in the 1960s that influenced psychedelic rock later in the decade. The Ornette Coleman Quartet is credited with creating a form of collective improvisation in 1959 that violated the musical conventions that were understood as fundamental to jazz. His "free jazz" would later shape the improvisational freedom that followed in the 1960s and was used to reflect cultural and political revolts against conventions and authorities throughout the social system through music.

Younger generations increasingly appreciated jazz and classical music. By the end of the 1950s, jazz had reached a pinnacle of cultural legitimacy: it was promoted internationally as "America's art form" and was taught in thousands of American colleges and high schools. Classical music gained renewed exposure. Nonesuch Records aimed low-budget classical albums to young consumers by licensing existing albums from European labels, repackaged with commissioned "artfully groovy" covers. The record label generated such success with these classical albums that it expanded into other music genres. The eclectic label became a force in the recording industry by pioneering electronic music and world music while keeping classical music as part of its foundation.

The rise of new and changing music and creative art forms resonated deeply with American youth. Trends in the arts—literature, art, dance, music, and theatre—reflected the turbulent social

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and political movements of the time. American universities and colleges increased courses in dance, theatre, fine art, creative writing, and related humanities and social sciences courses. In 1960, the University of North Dakota became the first and only institution of higher education in North Dakota to develop a graduate program in music. Two degrees were designed for the program: The Master of Education for individuals studying music education; and the Master of Arts for individuals wishing to improve performance skills. Music department chair Dr. William Boehle reworked the department and worked to promote the arts. He worked with President Starcher to develop the College of Fine Arts, the first and only one in the state at the time and one of very few in the upper Midwest. Since 1971, the Theatre, Music, and Visual Arts programs of the College of Fine Arts have enhanced the community's cultural atmosphere with public performances held at the Chester Fritz Auditorium and Burtness Theatre.

Through the years, the Chester Fritz Auditorium has hosted a wide variety of performances. In addition to the University's wind ensembles, choruses, orchestras, and theatre productions, the prominent venue has hosted many well-known musicians, comedians, productions, and other community events. Today, the walls of the lobbies and concourses of the auditorium are decorated with hundreds of photographs of the entertainers and celebrities who have appeared on stage at "The Fritz." Performers include popular musicians and bands through the decades, including Burl Ives, Guy Lombardo, Willie Nelson, Johnny Cash, Wynton Marsalis, Dave Brubeck, and Jethro Tull; comedians, including George Carlin, Rodney Dangerfield, Jay Leno, and Jerry Seinfeld; dance companies, including the American Ballet Company and the Royal Winnipeg Ballet; and renowned ensembles including the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra, and the Vienna Boys Choir. In addition to serving as a venue for the performing arts, the Chester Fritz Auditorium has also held the University's Commencement and President Inauguration Ceremonies. More recently, Commencement Ceremonies have been held at both the Chester Fritz Auditorium and the Alerus Center.

The Chester Fritz Auditorium was the largest performance venue in Grand Forks before the Alerus Center was completed in 2006. Before the construction of the Chester Fritz Auditorium, the Metropolitan Opera House (1890) in downtown Grand Forks was considered "the finest theatre building west of the Twin Cities," seating nearly 900 before it closed after the 1997 flood. Grand Forks is also home to two smaller theatres today, the Empire Arts Center and Firehall Theatre, both in downtown Grand Forks.<sup>46</sup> For over fifty years, the Chester Fritz Auditorium has allowed the University of North Dakota to bring the performing arts to students and the community. The community and state, in turn, have also supported the University and the Chester Fritz Auditorium. The mutual support and encouragement have allowed the Chester Fritz Auditorium to flourish with various entertainment opportunities over the years.

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<sup>46</sup> The Empire Arts Center is a former movie theatre, constructed in 1919 as the Grand Theatre, that has been turned into a multipurpose arts center. The Firehall Theatre was formally the Number One fire hall in the City of Grand Forks, constructed in 1905, and has served the Greater Grand Forks Community Theatre since it was purchased in 1982. Both the Empire Arts Center and Firehall Theatre are non-profit organizations.

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## ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The increased popularity of art, theatre, dance, and music postwar brought larger audiences to museums and performances than ever before. Meanwhile, architects were experimenting with the style and form of these spaces. Parallels between the design of the Chester Fritz Auditorium, with its tall portico, expansive lobbies, and opulent performance hall, can be drawn with other notable mid-century performing arts venues known for their modernist design, including Philharmonic Hall (1962, now known as David Geffen Hall), designed by Max Abramovitz, and the Metropolitan Opera House (1966) designed by Wallace K. Harrison, both located at New York's Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. Other major centers for the performing arts developed in this era include Centennial Concert Hall (1965), designed by Green, Blankstein, Russell Associates in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada; The Performing Arts Center (1969, now known as Marcus Center for the Performing Arts) by Harry Weese in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and Orchestra Hall (1974) by architect Hugh Hardy in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The Chester Fritz Auditorium is known for its superior acoustics and is regarded as one of the finest auditoriums in the upper Midwest. The closest regional comparable venues for performances and seating capacity designed are Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Winnipeg's Centennial Concert Hall in Manitoba, Canada. Other universities in the region constructed auditoriums, such as St. Catherine University's O'Shaughnessy Auditorium in St. Paul, Minnesota, and the Festival Concert Hall at North Dakota State University in Fargo, but these auditoriums were designed for smaller audiences.

Architect Myron Denbrook of the local Grand Forks firm Wells, Denbrook, Adams, Inc. was selected to translate the ideals Chester Fritz had expressed: a place for the people of North Dakota; for listening; for enhancing the learning process; and for uplifting the human spirit. Denbrook worked closely with University officials, especially the Auditorium Building Committee. Committee chairman Dr. John S. Penn and Denbrook worked together when designing the Burtness Theatre (1963) and, in doing so, gained valuable insight directly translating to the auditorium's design. They visited other auditoriums and reportedly deliberated for hours about the aesthetics, construction economy, space details, materials, requirements for a varied stage, traffic flow, staffing, operation, and maintenance. Particularly challenging was looking into the future to anticipate new art forms and identify usage parameters for the years ahead.

Myron E. Denbrook (1922-2012) was born in Akron, Ohio. He earned a liberal arts-based degree from Ohio State University, followed by a two-year professional program in architecture at the University of Washington. Denbrook worked as a drafting intern for various architectural firms in Washington, where he was also employed as a tool designer for Boeing Aircraft. After moving to Grand Forks, Denbrook worked as an intern and staff architect with Theodore B. Wells from 1947 to 1949, when the two men formalized a business partnership under the firm name Wells-Denbrook. After Wells retired in 1964, Denbrook involved several other engineering-oriented architects in his practice, renamed Wells, Denbrook, Adams, Wagner Architects, PC. In 1978, the firm merged and incorporated as Engineers - Architects, P.C., better

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known as EAPC. Denbrook continued working into his eighties, mainly involved with specifications writing and cost estimating.<sup>47</sup>

Theodore B. Wells was a distinguished regional architect who had established his firm in Grand Forks by 1923. His familiarity with emerging architectural styles, trends, and popular culture is reflected in the firm's early work, comprised of Period Revivals, Art Deco, Streamline Moderne, and International Style designs. Myron Denbrook, on the other hand, was the consummate Modernist, essentially an architectural engineer who believed that technology and rational problem-solving provided the most constructive design modes for economical, efficient, functional buildings in a post-war growth era. With Denbrook's influence, the firm Wells-Denbrook dramatically changed its architectural priorities completing extensive work in the Upper Red River Valley and throughout North Dakota and Minnesota. Myron Denbrook anticipated that the emergent direction of architecture after World War II would reflect pure Modernism, expressing technology, rationality, and material science as the cultural values in demand.

The firm designed many of the buildings at the University of North Dakota campus, including the Medical Science Building (O'Kelly/Ireland Hall, 1947, 1952; 1957, 1962), Harrington Hall (1952), Education Building (1954), Johnstone and Fulton Halls (1952/1956), Chester Fritz Library (1961/1982), Walsh Hall (1959/1963), Squires Hall (1963), Burtness Theatre (1963), Leonard Hall (1964), and Memorial Union (Architects: Grosz & Anderson 1951; Wells Denbrook 1964). These buildings on the Core Campus exhibit Collegiate Gothic design elements. In contrast, the Chester Fritz Auditorium is a typical example of the strictly functional Modernist expression influenced by Myron Denbrook, which prevailed in the firm's work from 1965 to 1978 at the University of North Dakota, constructed primarily on the west side of the campus.

The design of the Chester Fritz Auditorium was cataloged in the Wells, Denbrook, Adams, Inc. project files beginning in 1968. Conceptual design through construction was coordinated with architectural, engineering, and consulting firms involving over twenty individuals in the planning, design, and inspections. Myron Denbrook's Modernist beliefs and his fascination with emerging material technologies led to the groundbreaking structural design of the Chester Fritz Auditorium using vertical precast concrete double-tee wall panels. Precast reinforced concrete construction was limited during the early twentieth century but became widely used to build defensive structures during World War II. Postwar, precast concrete construction became more common when labor shortages placed a premium on economical construction methods. The design was coordinated with the structural engineering consulting firms Loos and Traeholt and Engineering Associates, P.C. Former University of North Dakota facilities management director

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<sup>47</sup> Steve Martens, *Theodore B. Wells and the Firm of Wells-Denbrook Architects in North Dakota; 1923-1978*, (Grand Forks Historic Preservation Commission, State Historic Preservation Office, State Historical Society of North Dakota, 2015), 13-14.

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LeRoy Sondrol recalled, "The Chester Fritz Auditorium building tested the limits of Myron Denbrook's technical expertise."<sup>48</sup>

Following Louis Sullivan's famous axiom, "form follows function," the building was designed using functionalism to pursue acoustic excellence. The design was coordinated with acoustical consultant Robert C. Coffeen and Associates on a "megaphone principle," projecting sound toward the audience. The firm (now known as Avant Acoustics) was established in 1964, and the Chester Fritz Auditorium was one of the firm's early projects. The preparation of the design also included a one-tenth-scale model of the auditorium, which Robert C. Coffeen and Associates made to test the acoustics before construction began. Large enough to stand inside, the physical model was built to examine and make necessary alterations to the auditorium to refine the design before construction. The ability to test the acoustics ensured that the best solutions were studied, and the result was a loss of less than nine decibels from front to back in the finished performance space.

Robert C. Coffeen began his career in acoustical consulting as a young electrical engineer designing a paging system at Dulles International Airport in Washington, D.C.<sup>49</sup> In the years following, Coffeen provided acoustical consulting services on over 3,000 projects worldwide. His works include performing arts centers, arenas, stadiums, gymnasiums, legislative meeting chambers, religious worship facilities, lecture halls, music and dance rehearsal rooms, and recital halls. Coffeen has made significant contributions to the science of acoustics carrying out his lifelong goal of making "every space the company touched sound great."<sup>50</sup> In addition to consulting work, Coffeen has also had a long career as a professor of architecture instructing graduate-level students at the University of Kansas.

The design of the Chester Fritz Auditorium fulfills two chief guiding principles of Modernist Architecture: functionalist design and truth to materials. The building's purpose and function were paramount to the design, taking precedence over beauty. The result is the purity of form using simple geometries and suppressed ornamentation—the building's shape and materials being the focus of architectural observation. The building's exterior form expresses programmatic changes and the interior functions. The design's forthrightness is also evident through exposed materials. For instance, the vertical ribs of the double-tee panels provide a dramatic combination of structural strength and aesthetic beauty in its vertical line patterning.

At the building's interior, modernist ideals included open and flexible floor plans, clean lines, and the use of natural light. The spaces outside the auditorium's house and stage areas were designed using open floor plans so spaces flowed into one another and allowed for different types of gatherings. The rehearsal room below the main house was designed as a large open space with folding walls that could be used to separate rooms. Large areas of glass curtain walls

<sup>48</sup> Martens, *Theodore B. Wells and the Firm of Wells-Denbrook Architects*, 52.

<sup>49</sup> "Avant Acoustics - Our Firm." Avant Acoustics, June 24, 2021.  
<https://www.avantacoustics.com/our-firm/>.

<sup>50</sup> "National Council of Acoustical Consultants Present C. Paul Boner Award to Robert C. Coffeen, FASA," (National Council of Acoustical Consultants, January 3, 2018).

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ensured that the outside was highly visible from the inside and provided ample daylighting. When the design was embellished to add detail, it was done in a restrained manner, such as using articulated metal railings with inlaid wood handrails and adding aggregate stone detailing at interior columns and ceilings. The lobby also originally had a monochromatic color palette to create a bold and impressive impact, indicative of Modernist ideals.

Critics of Modernism and late-Modernist architecture have criticized the buildings designed in the Modern Movement as inflexible and outdated in today's world. Many Modernist buildings were motivated mainly by pragmatic design factors like efficiency and economy. The inadequacy of Modernist architecture has been attributed to technological failures, such as the use of materials that later proved to be hazardous to health (e.g., asbestos) or were of poor quality for long-term usage; cultural failures resulting from the adoption of standardized techniques and methods eliminating individualism in the built environment or their functionalist design being inflexible for changing programs and use; and climatic failures such as using large areas of glass in all climates—hot or cold—instead relying on technology to provide comfortable conditions. However, the University of North Dakota and many public users regard the Chester Fritz Auditorium as being perhaps Denbrook's best-functioning and most lasting of his late-Modernist projects. Myron Denbrook also considered the Chester Fritz Auditorium the pride and joy out of the many buildings he designed in his long career. A plaque in the lobby states that Myron Denbrook "spent many hours here in the ensuing years, enjoying the events, the atmosphere, and the perfect acoustics."

## CONCLUSION

Chester Fritz Auditorium meets the requirements for nomination under Criterion A for its association with events that have made significant contributions to the broad patterns of history in the area of education, entertainment, and the arts. In addition, the auditorium is locally significant under Criterion C for the building's distinctive architectural design as the work of a distinguished master in the field of architecture and for its construction methods characteristic of the late-Modernist movement. The Chester Fritz Auditorium was constructed at the University of North Dakota during a boom in higher education following World War II. These changes occurred during a period of societal change that is reflected in transitions in arts and entertainment, including arts and humanities education. Myron Denbrook, a regionally prominent architect, designed the building and employed distinctive construction methods using precast concrete panel technology. Robert C. Coffeen, an acoustical consultant, is credited with creating a space known for its superior acoustics. Although the Auditorium is immediately adjacent to the University of North Dakota Historic District's boundary and was constructed after the District's period of significance, the Chester Fritz Auditorium meets the requirements for individual National Register listing and, thus, is also eligible as a contributing resource.

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☒ Local government
- ☒ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository: University of North Dakota Chester Fritz Library, Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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## 10. Geographical Data

### Acreage of Property Approximately 3 Acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 47.92159° N

Longitude: 97.078642° W

Or

### UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

1. Zone:

Easting:

Northing:

### Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary of the Chester Fritz Auditorium is located within County Parcel Number 44-3117-00053-004. The boundary is defined beginning northeast of the building at the corner of University Avenue and Yale Drive. The eastern boundary runs approximately 445' to the south along Yale Drive. The southern boundary extends west approximately 300' along the northern edge of a parking lot. The western edge extends north along a parking lot and continues approximately 445', running along a walkway that extends between the Gorecki Alumni Center and the Chester Fritz Auditorium. The northern boundary extends along University Avenue approximately 300'.

### Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The Chester Fritz Auditorium is located within a University-owned 36-acre unplatted parcel that exceeds the area of the verbal boundary description. The verbal boundary contains all areas and extant features historically associated with the Chester Fritz Auditorium based on the Site Plan of the Architectural Plans developed by Wells, Denbrook, Adams, Inc. in 1970, modified slightly with present-day boundaries delineated by manmade features such as streets, parking lots, and sidewalks. The western edge of the boundary has been shifted east from the original Site Plan's western boundary (noted as the contract limit line), which was located along Dartmouth Drive. Dartmouth Drive was removed when West Green Tin Huts were dismantled in the 1980s. The construction of the Gorecki Alumni Center has reduced the site's historic integrity along the westernmost border and has shifted the boundary east.

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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Agatha Frisby - Prairie Centre Architecture & Consulting (consultant)  
organization: for the Grand Forks Historic Preservation Commission  
street & number: Grand Forks City Hall, 255 N. 4th Street, P.O. Box 5200  
city or town: Grand Forks state: North Dakota zip code: 58206-5200

e-mail GFHPC@grandforksgov.com  
telephone: 701-787-3756  
date: September 5, 2023

The nomination has been financed in part with Federal funds from the National Park Service, a division of the United States Department of Interior, and administered by the State Historical Society of North Dakota. The contents and opinions, however, do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the United States Department of Interior or the State Historical Society of North Dakota.

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## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

## Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

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## Photo Log

Name of Property: Chester Fritz Auditorium

City or Vicinity: Grand Forks

County: Grand Forks

State: North Dakota

Photographer: Agatha Frisby

Date Photographed: May 1, 2023

Description of Photograph(s) and number as follows:

#1 of 10: ND\_Grand Forks County\_Chester Fritz Auditorium\_0001

East façade, camera facing west

#2 of 10: ND\_Grand Forks County\_Chester Fritz Auditorium\_0002

South and east façades, camera facing northwest

#3 of 10: ND\_Grand Forks County\_Chester Fritz Auditorium\_0003

West and southwest façades, camera facing northeast

#4 of 10: ND\_Grand Forks County\_Chester Fritz Auditorium\_0004

North façade, camera facing south

#5 of 10: ND\_Grand Forks County\_Chester Fritz Auditorium\_0005

North and east façades, camera facing southwest

#6 of 10: ND\_Grand Forks County\_Chester Fritz Auditorium\_0006

Interior of auditorium main house and stage, camera facing southwest

#7 of 10: ND\_Grand Forks County\_Chester Fritz Auditorium\_0007

Interior of auditorium main house from the stage, camera facing east

#8 of 10: ND\_Grand Forks County\_Chester Fritz Auditorium\_0008

Interior view of stage, flyloft, and main house, camera facing northeast

#9 of 10: ND\_Grand Forks County\_Chester Fritz Auditorium\_0009

Interior view of main lobby, camera facing north

#10 of 10: ND\_Grand Forks County\_Chester Fritz Auditorium\_0010

Interior view of women's dressing room, camera facing east

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

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**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1 – 60-100 hours  
Tier 2 – 120 hours  
Tier 3 – 230 hours  
Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

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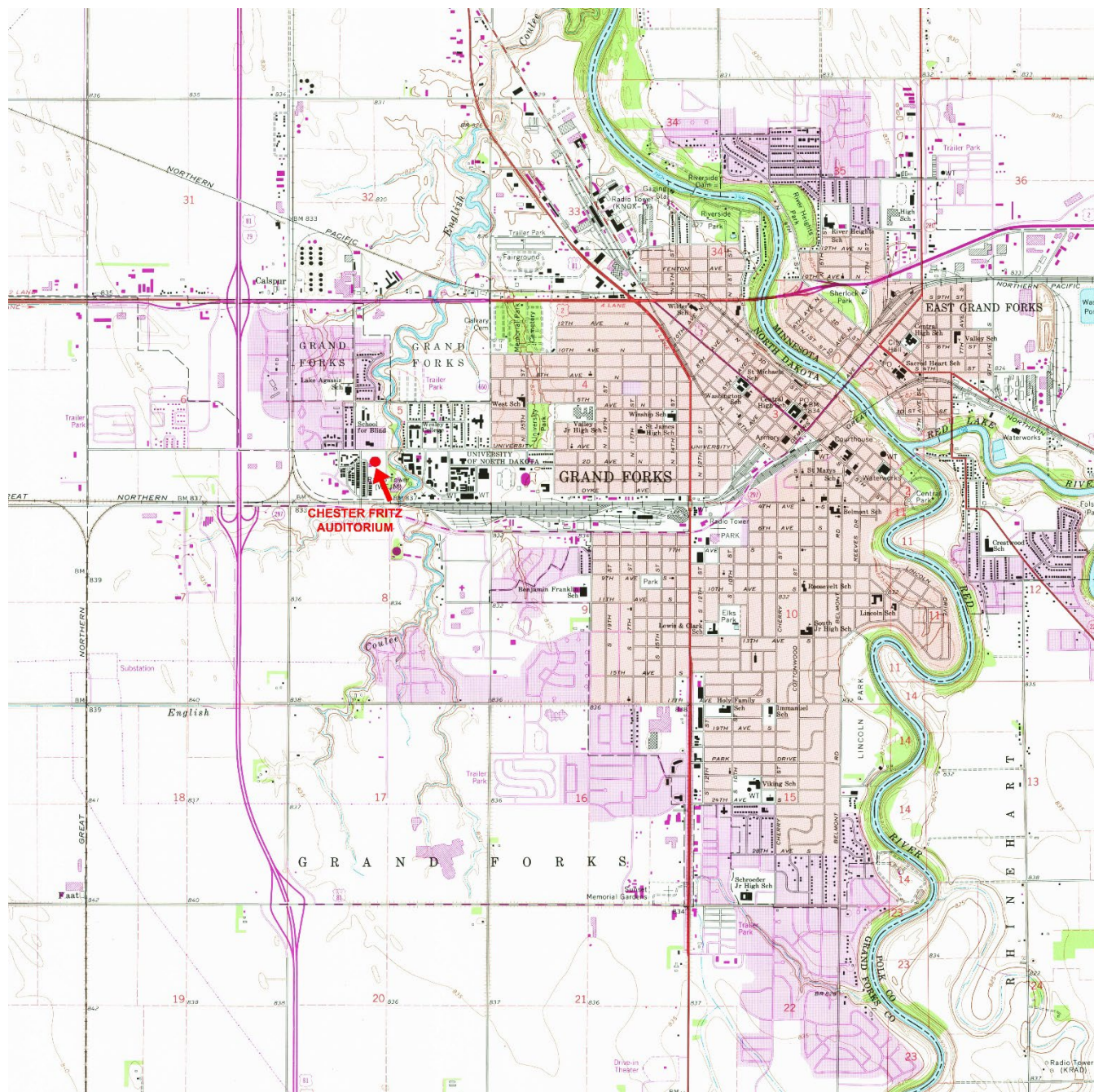
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**Figure 1** 1963 (Photorevised 1979) USGS Topographic map for Grand ForksND, excerpt (Location of Chester Fritz Auditorium indicated with red dot and arrow).



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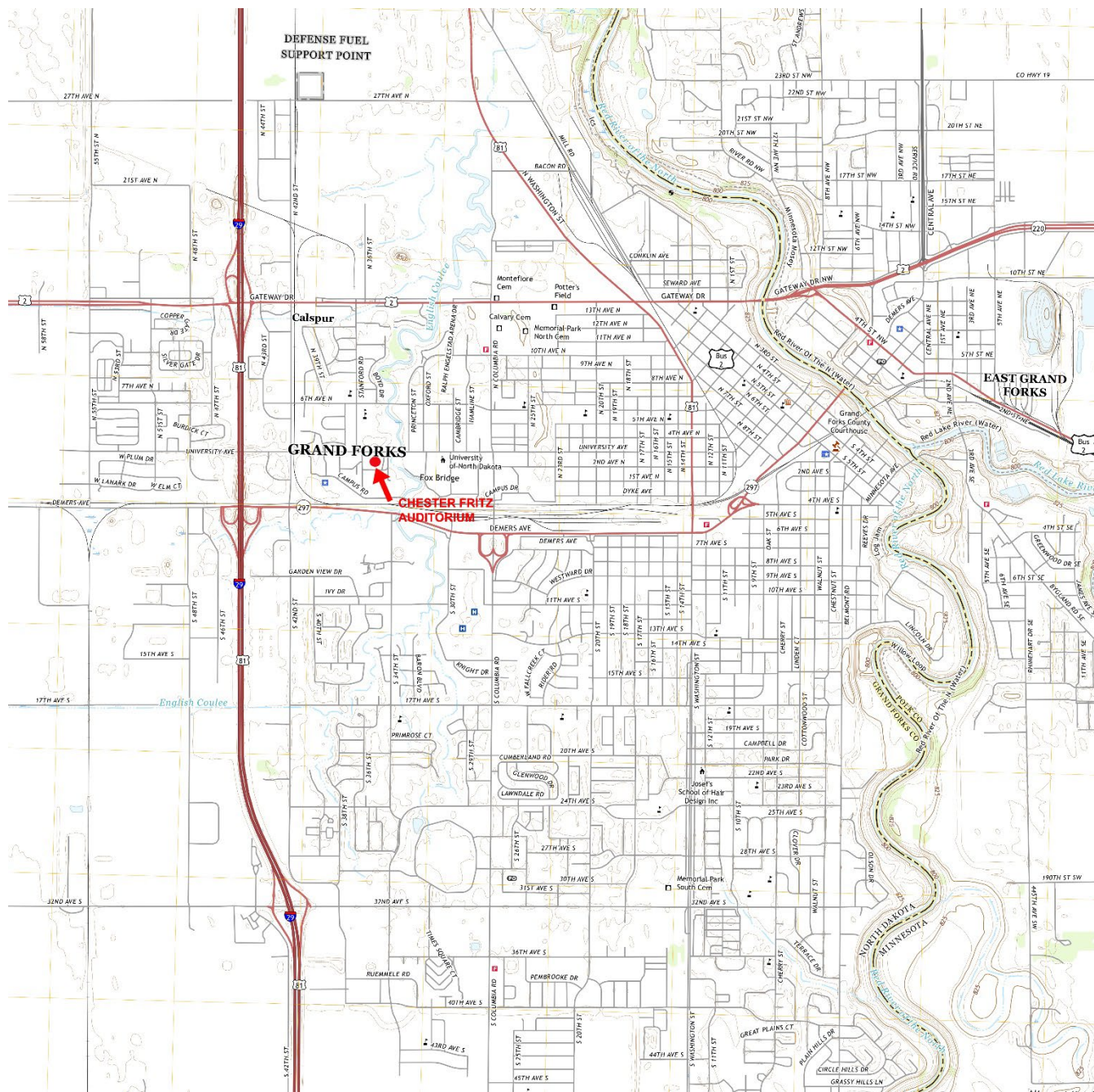
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**Figure 2** 2020 USGS Topographic map for Grand Forks, ND, excerpt (Location of Chester Fritz Auditorium indicated with red dot and arrow).

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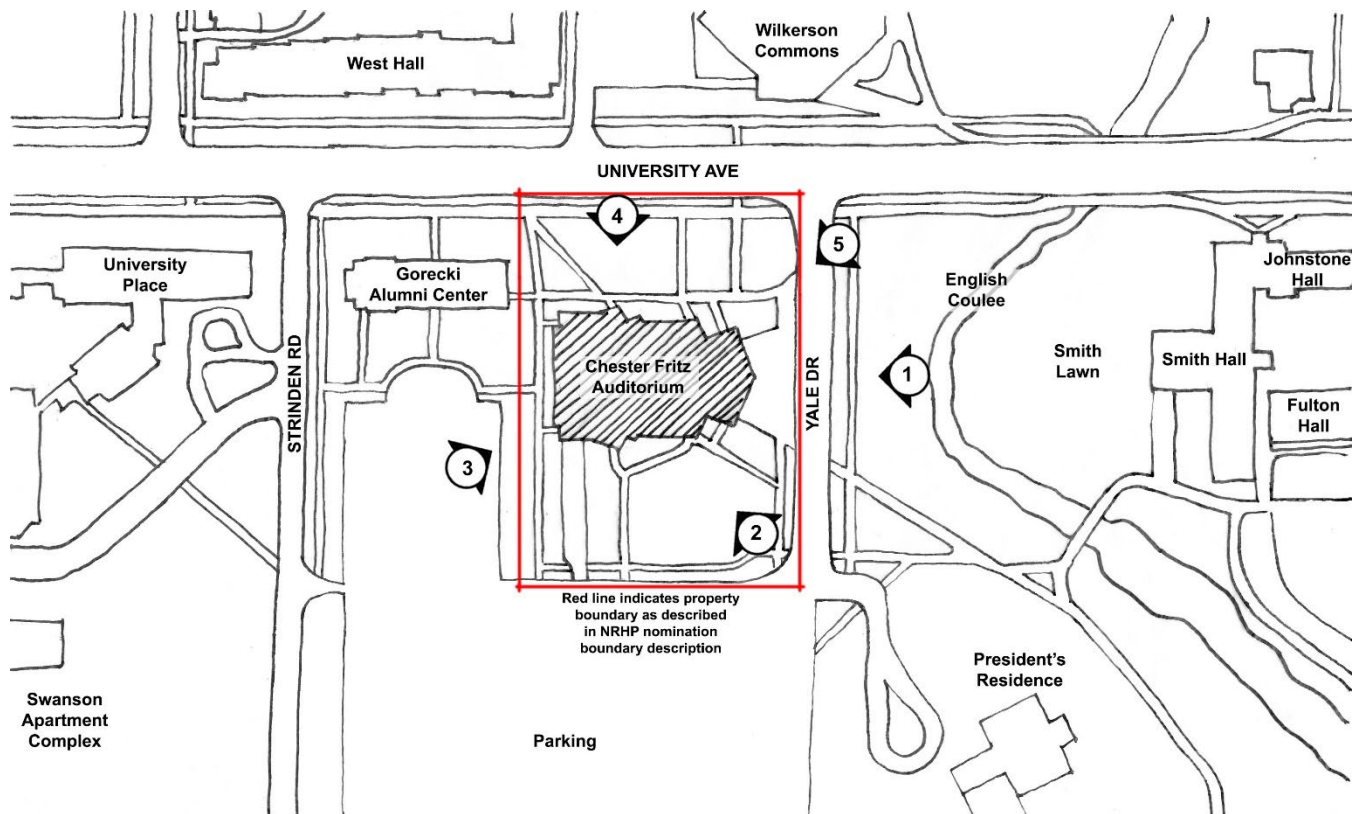
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**Figure 3** Sketch Map of Chester Fritz Auditorium and surrounding University of North Dakota property with reference photo standpoints indicated.



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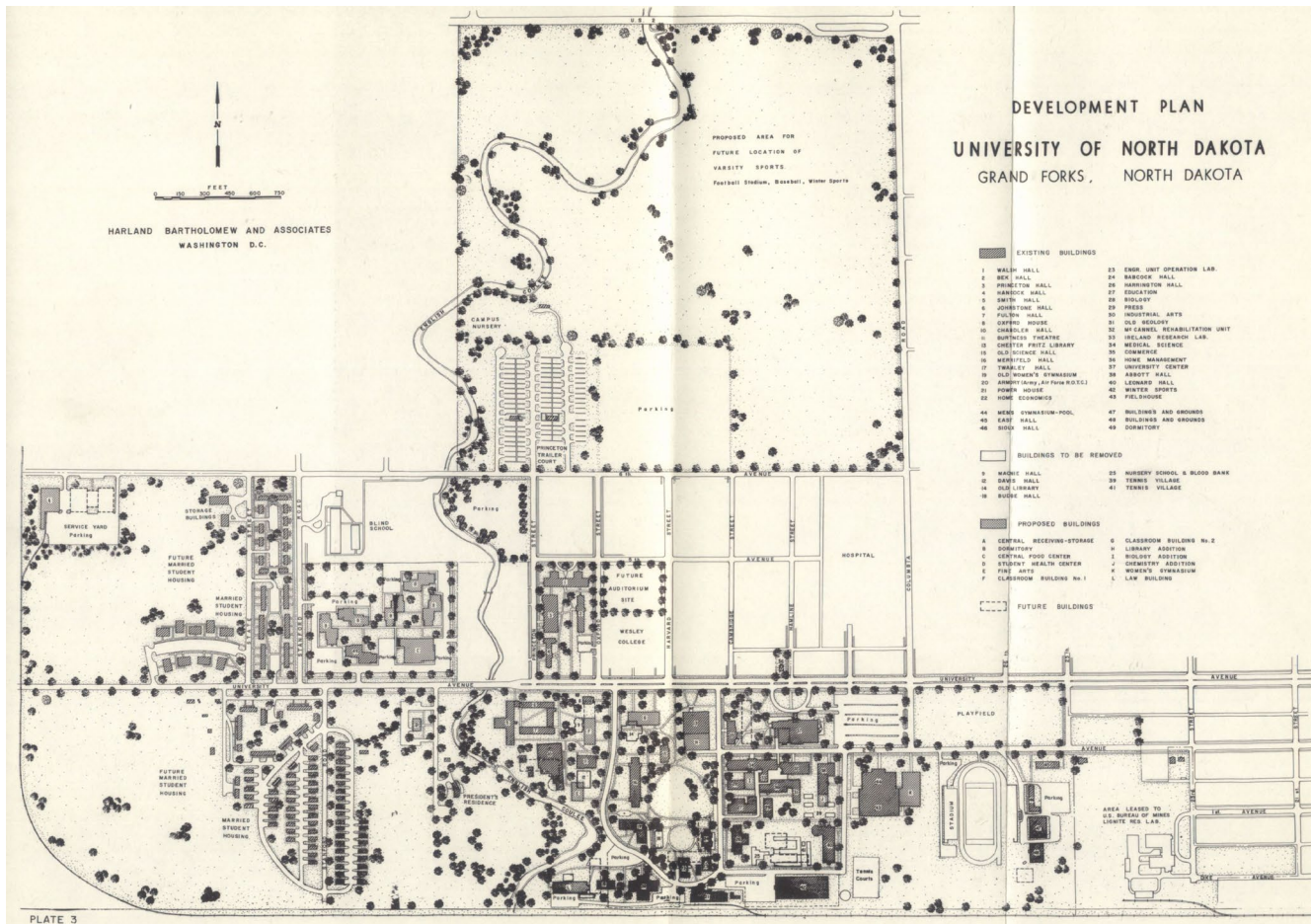
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**Figure 4** Campus Master Plan 1964. Building and Landmarks. UA032. Box 1, Folder 14. Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections. Chester Fritz Library. University of North Dakota.



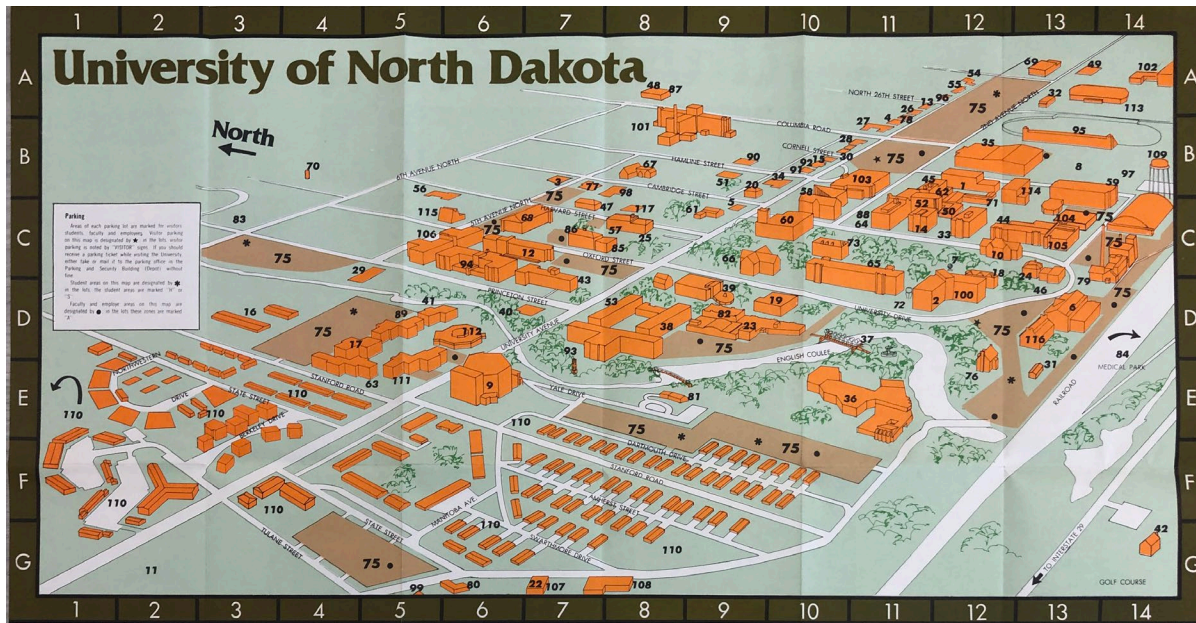
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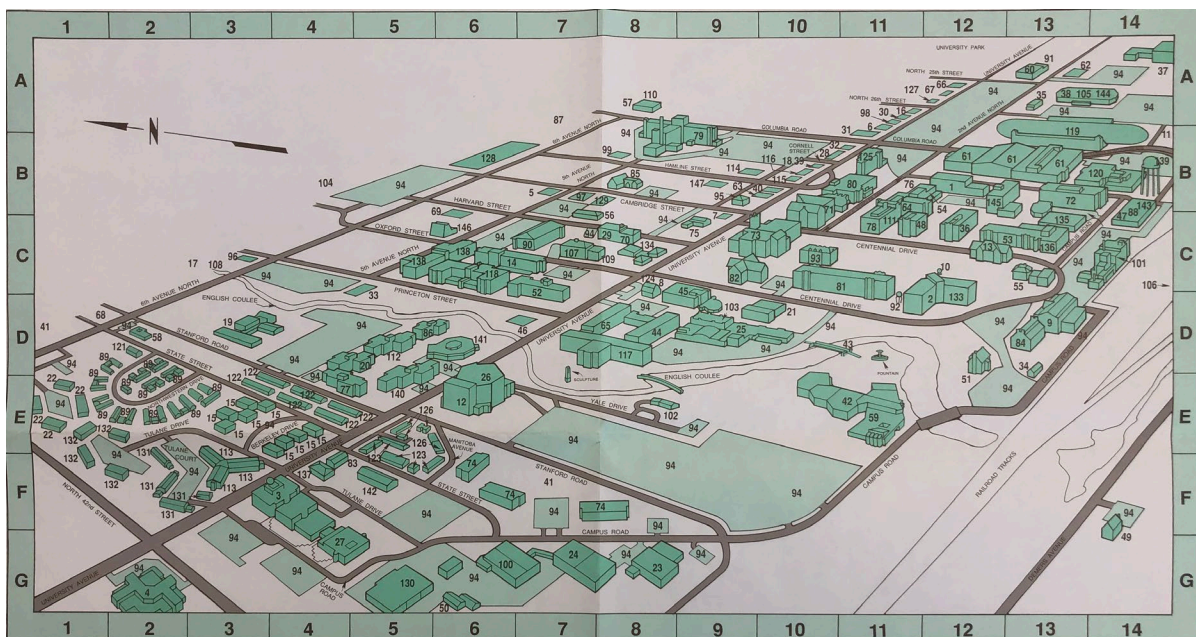
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**Figure 5** UND Campus Map (Chester Fritz Auditorium #9), October 1976. Building and Landmarks. UA032. Box 1, Folder 16. Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections. Chester Fritz Library. University of North Dakota.



**Figure 6** UND Campus Map (Chester Fritz Auditorium #12, 26), January 1989. Building and Landmarks. UA032. Box 1, Folder 17. Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections. Chester Fritz Library. University of North Dakota.

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1. Architect Denbrook
2. Mayor Magnusson
3. Steve Lund, President of UND Student Body

June 26, 1970--a Great Day for GWS!

4. President Starcher, turning his shovelful, with the silver-plated shovel given to UND by a hardware man in Grand Forks for breaking ground for the CHESTER FRITZ LIBRARY.  
Senator Longmire was also there and shows in a picture I'm keeping here.

**Figure 7** Groundbreaking ceremony for the Chester Fritz Auditorium, June 26, 1970. Identified are Architect Myron Denbrook, Mayor Hugo Magnusson, Steve Lund (President of the UND student body), and President George Starcher. Identification #OGL 410-268. Courtesy of the University Archives Photograph Collection. 9/.



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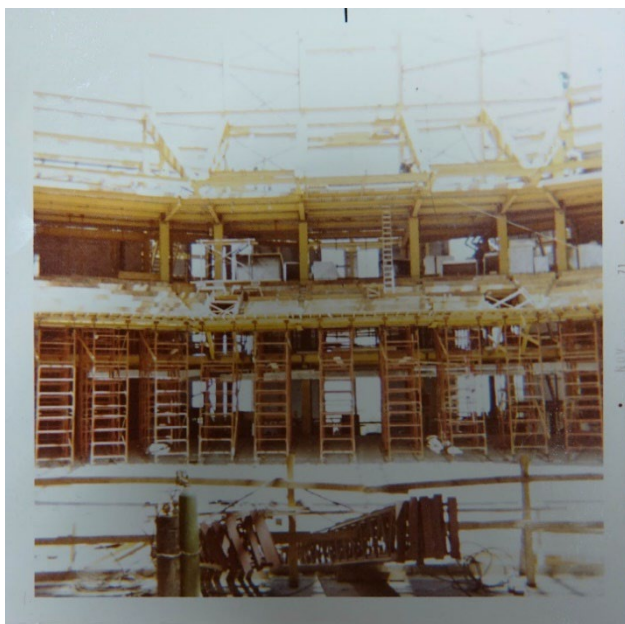
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**Figure 8, Figure 9, Figure 10, Figure 11** Chester Fritz Auditorium while under construction, ca. 1971 or 1972. Chester Fritz Auditorium Photograph Collection, courtesy of the Chester Fritz Auditorium Records held at the Chester Fritz Auditorium.

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**Figure 12** Chester Fritz Auditorium while under construction, ca. winter of 1972. Identification # UAP 874. Courtesy of the University Archives Photograph Collection.



**Figure 13** The entrance of the Chester Fritz Auditorium from the English Coulee, no date. Identification # UAP 19377. Courtesy of the University Archives Photograph Collection.



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**Figure 14, Figure 15,  
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Chester Fritz Auditorium  
shortly after construction.  
Chester Fritz Auditorium  
Photograph Collection,  
courtesy of the Chester  
Fritz Auditorium Records  
held at the Chester Fritz  
Auditorium.

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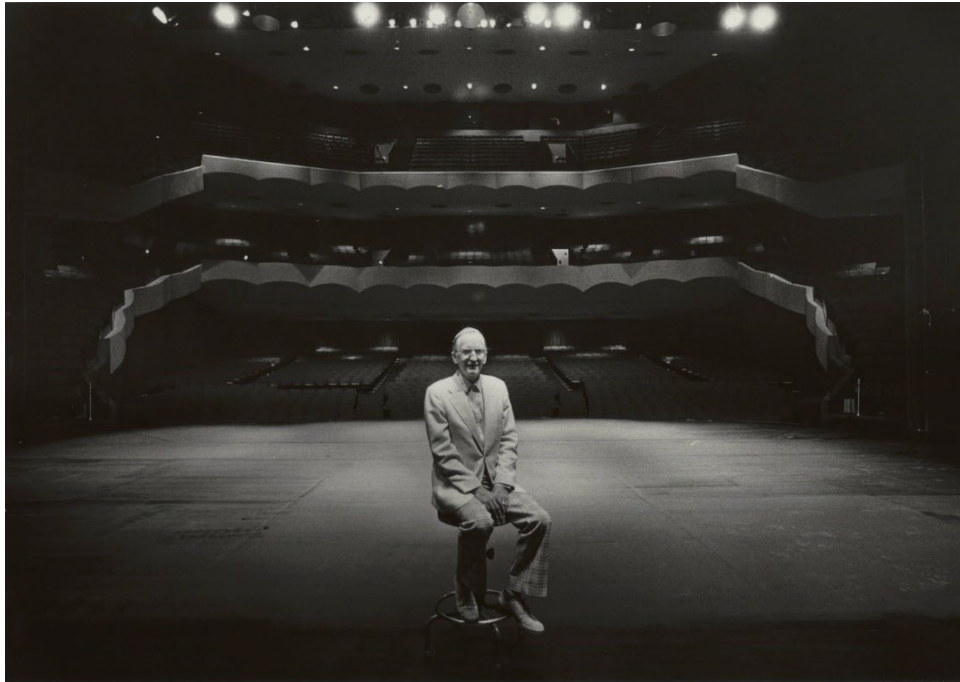
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**Figure 20** Myron Denbrook, the architect of the Chester Fritz Auditorium, sits on the stage, no date. Identification # UAP 19492. Courtesy of the University Archives Photograph Collection.



**Figure 21** The entrance of the Chester Fritz Auditorium from the English Coulee, June 7, 1977. Identification # OGL 198-2631. Courtesy of the University Archives Photograph Collection.



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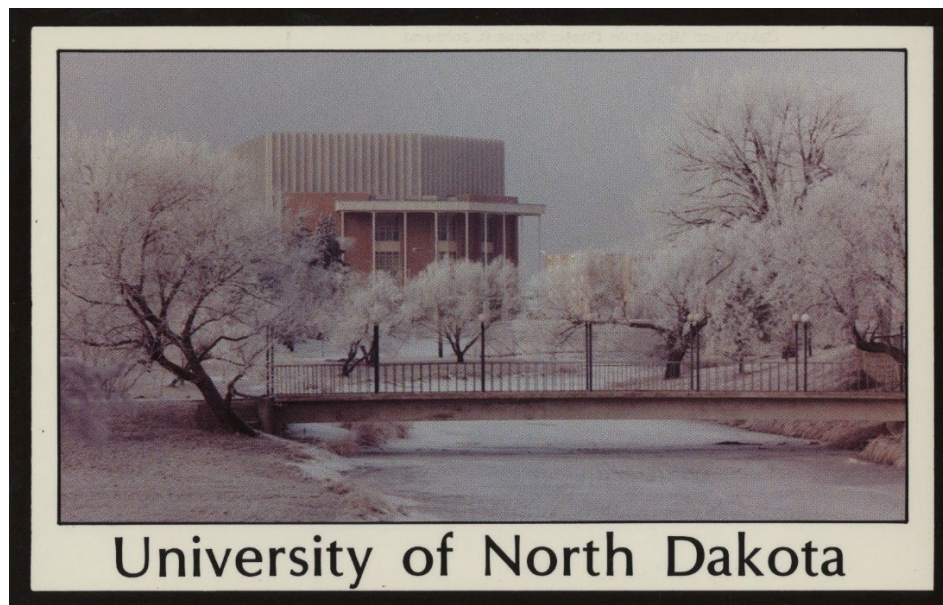
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**Figure 22** The Chester Fritz Auditorium at night from the English Coulee, October 19, 1976. Elwyn B. Robinson Papers, OGLMC 198, Series 8, Folder 18. Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections. Chester Fritz Library. University of North Dakota.



**Figure 23** Postcard of the Chester Fritz Auditorium with the Fox Memorial Bridge in the winter. ca. 1985. The back of the postcard reads, "The Chester Fritz Auditorium plays host to musicians, dancers, and actors from around the world. It is on the University of North Dakota Campus in Grand Forks." Grand Forks Herald. Identification # UAP 20749. Courtesy of the University Archives Photograph Collection.



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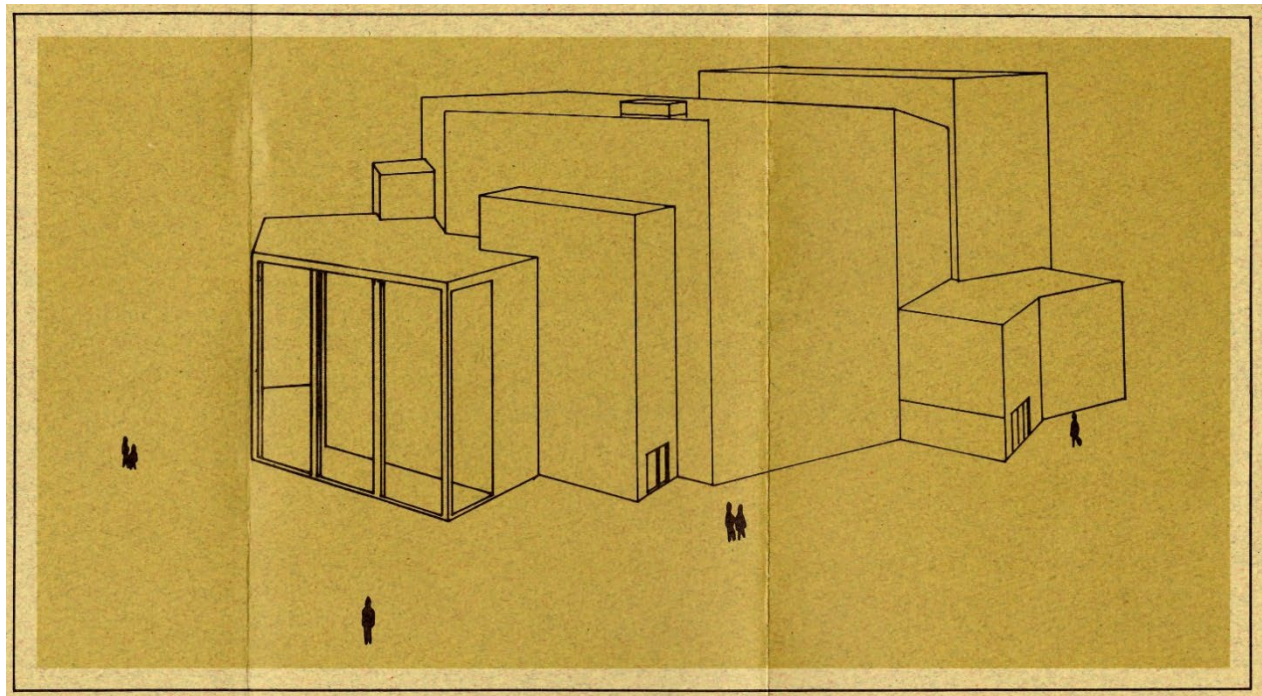
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**Figure 24** Chester Fritz Auditorium architectural massing diagram. Promotional brochure: *Chester Fritz Auditorium*, University of North Dakota: University Press, 1972.

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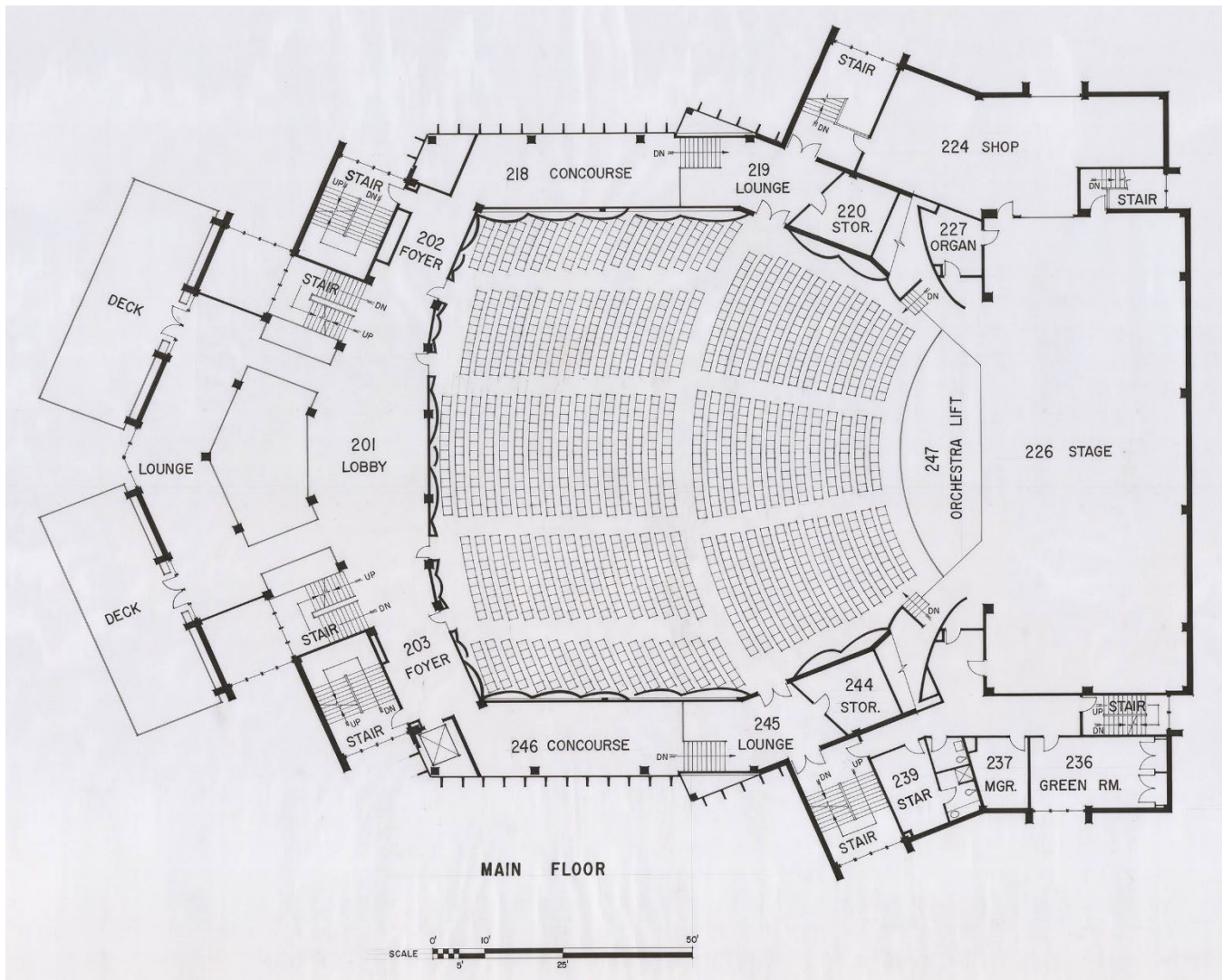


Figure 25 Floor plan of the Chester Fritz Auditorium, Main Floor. Wells Denbrook Architectural Records.

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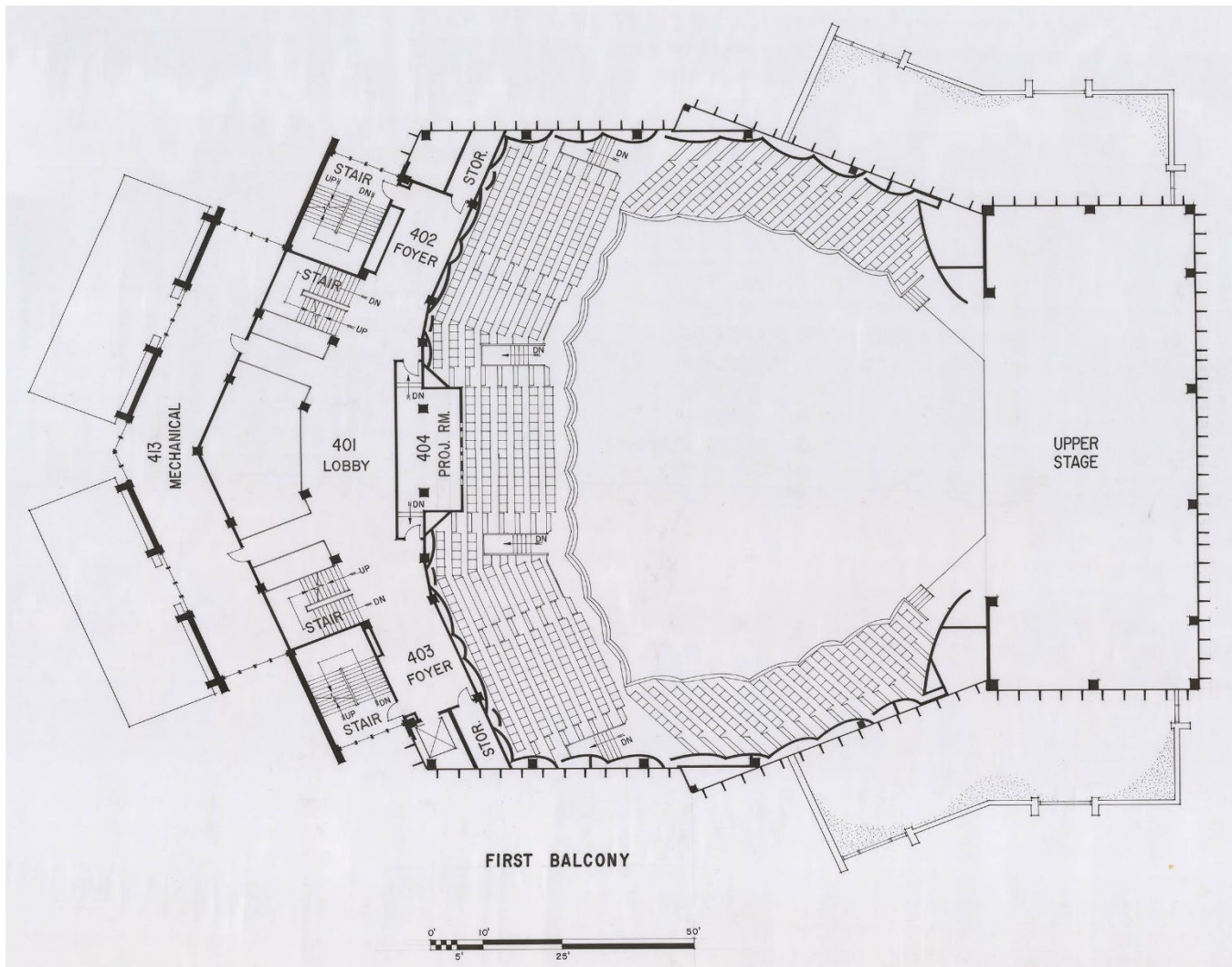
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**Figure 26** Floor plan of the Chester Fritz Auditorium, First Balcony. Wells Denbrook Architectural Records.



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Name of Property

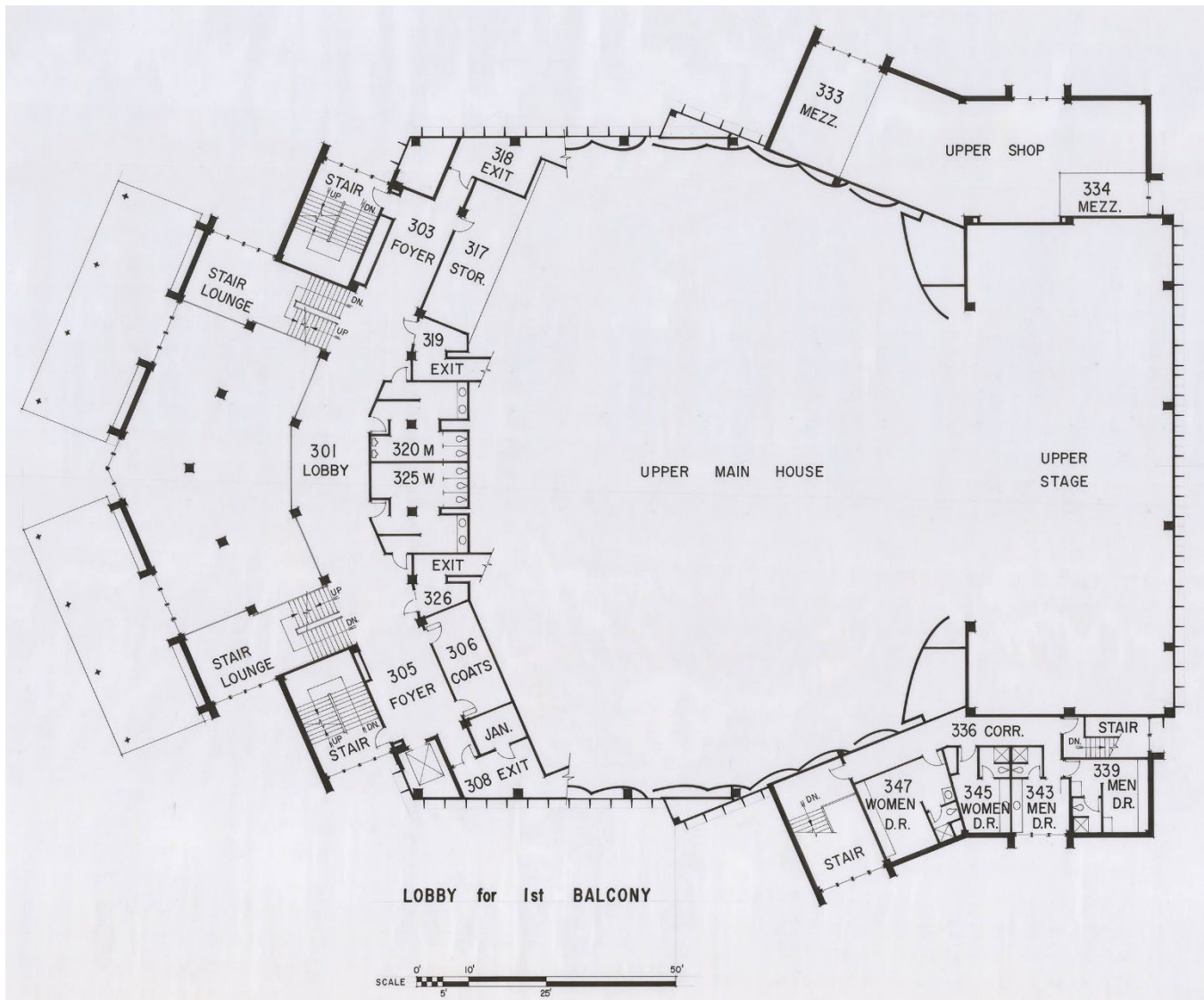
Grand Forks, North Dakota

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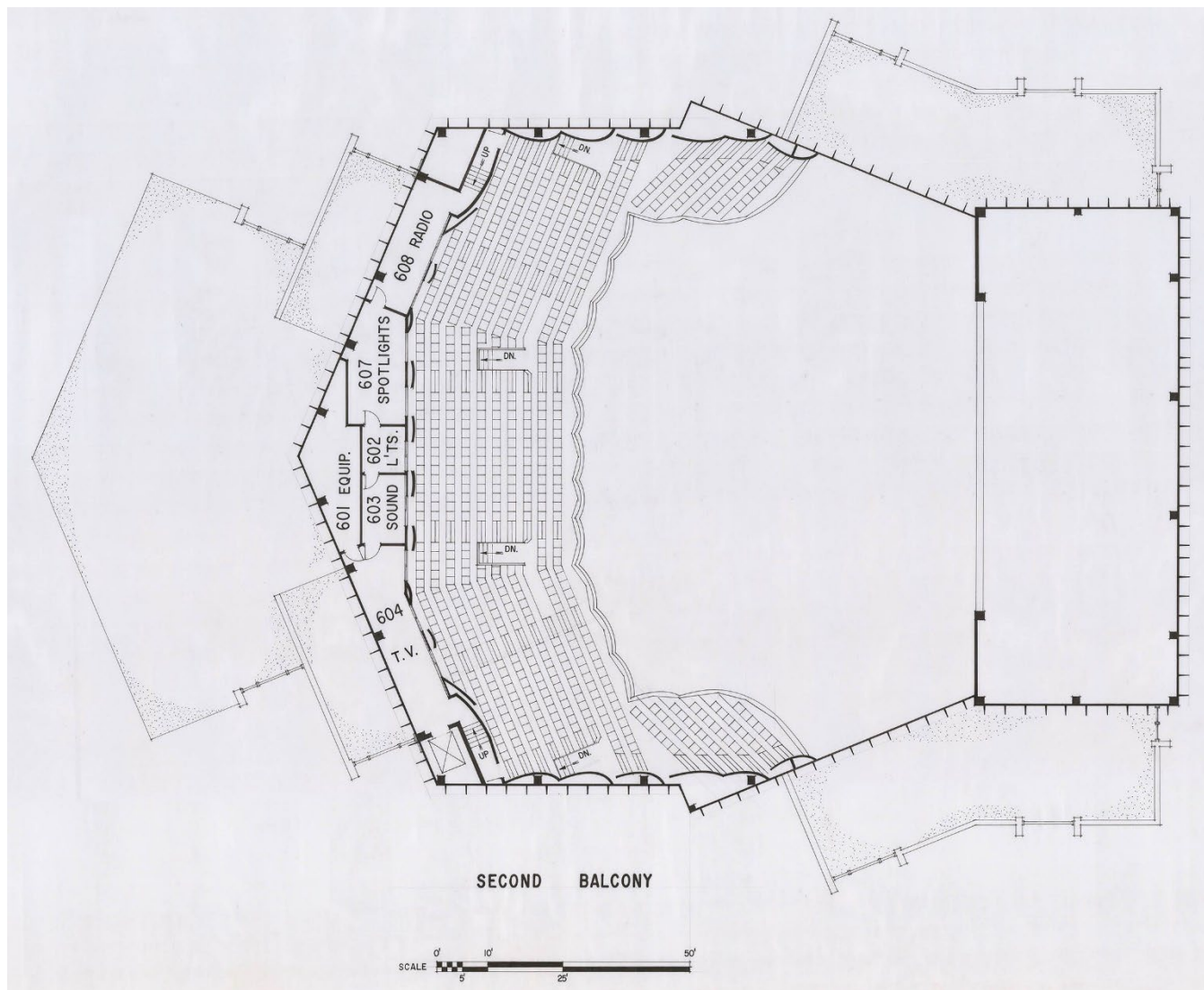
**Figure 27** Floor plan of the Chester Fritz Auditorium, Lobby for First Balcony. Wells Denbrook Architectural Records.

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**Figure 28** Floor plan of the Chester Fritz Auditorium, Second Balcony. Wells Denbrook Architectural Records.

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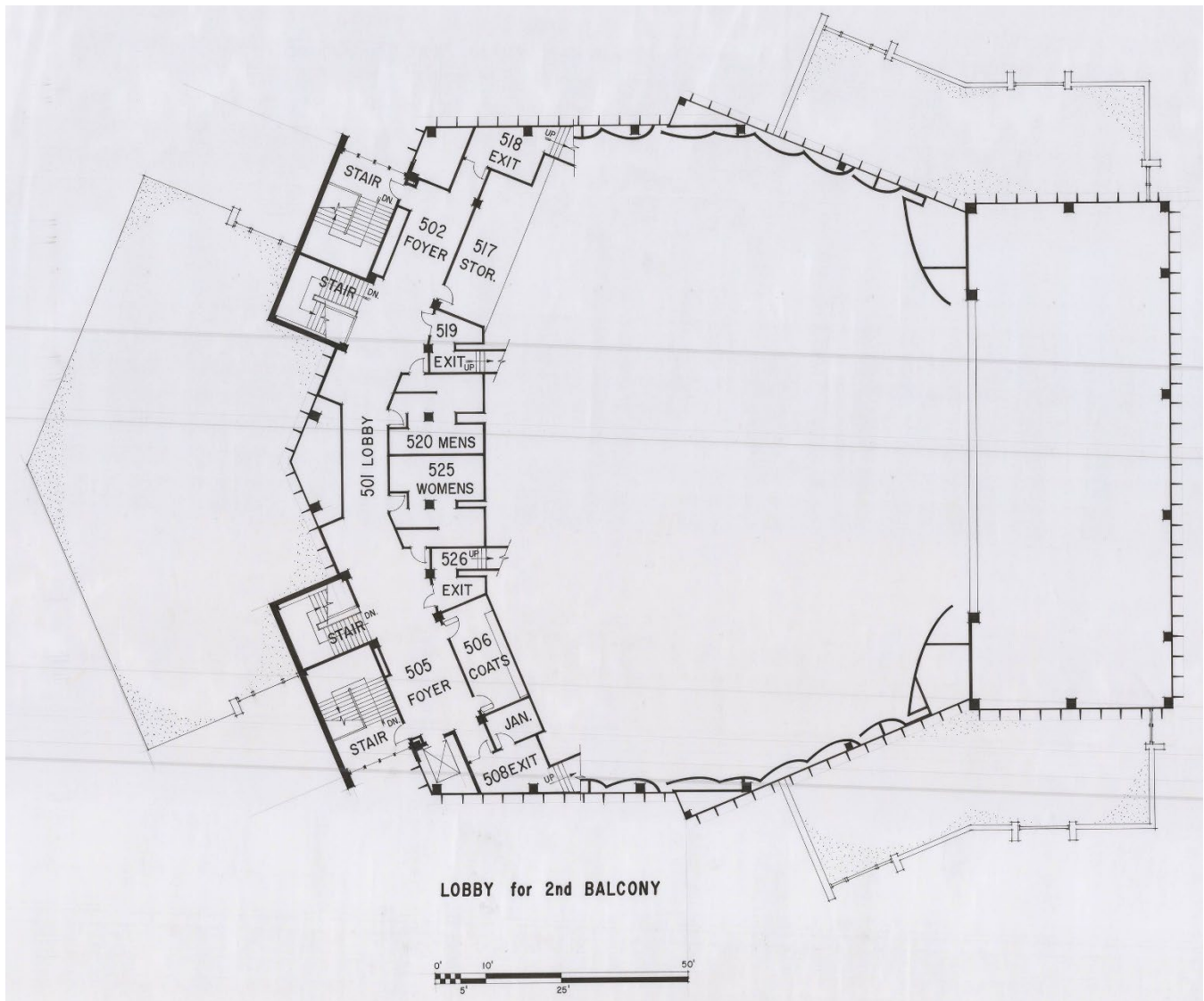
Grand Forks, North Dakota

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**Figure 29** Floor plan of the Chester Fritz Auditorium, Lobby for First Balcony. Wells Denbrook Architectural Records.



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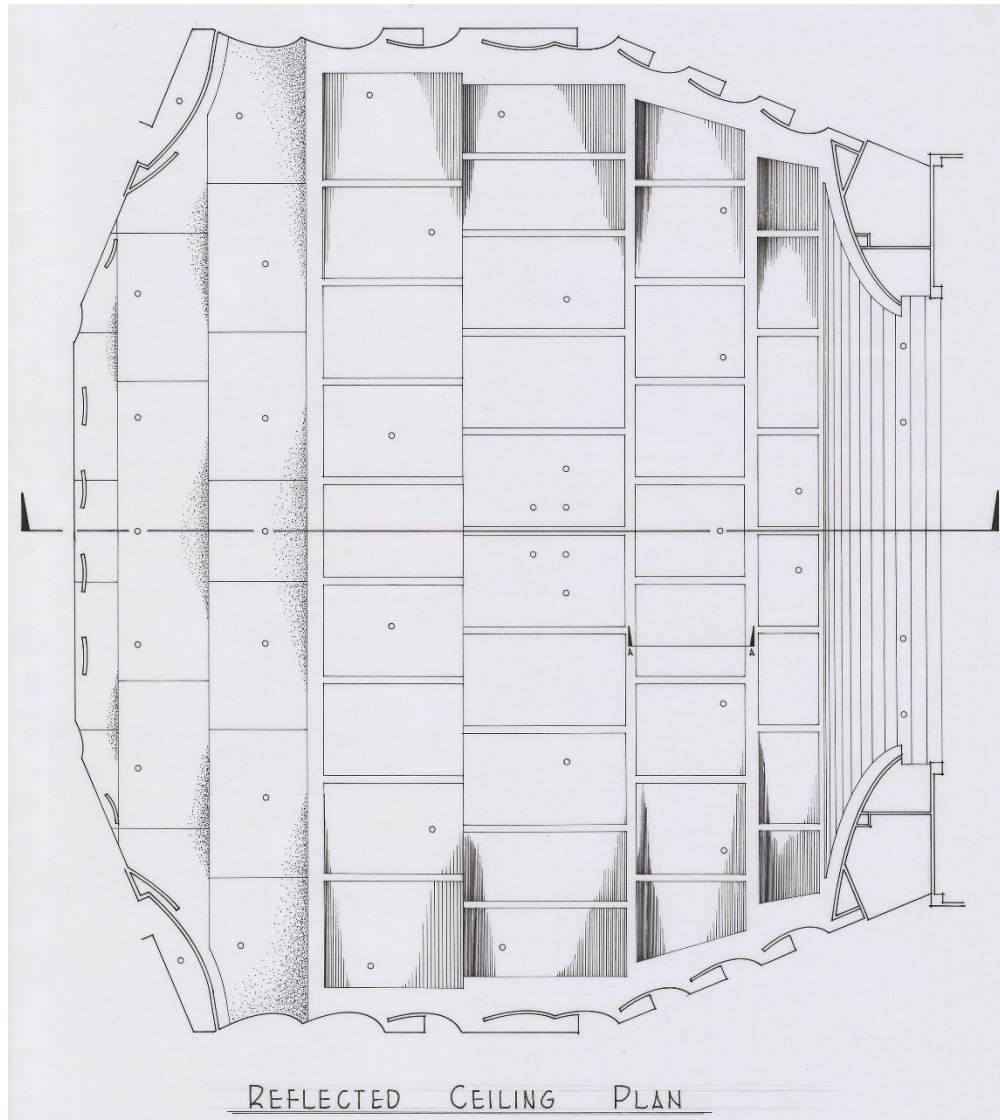
Grand Forks, North Dakota

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**Figure 30** Reflected ceiling plan of the Chester Fritz Auditorium, Main house acoustical panels. Wells Denbrook Architectural Records.

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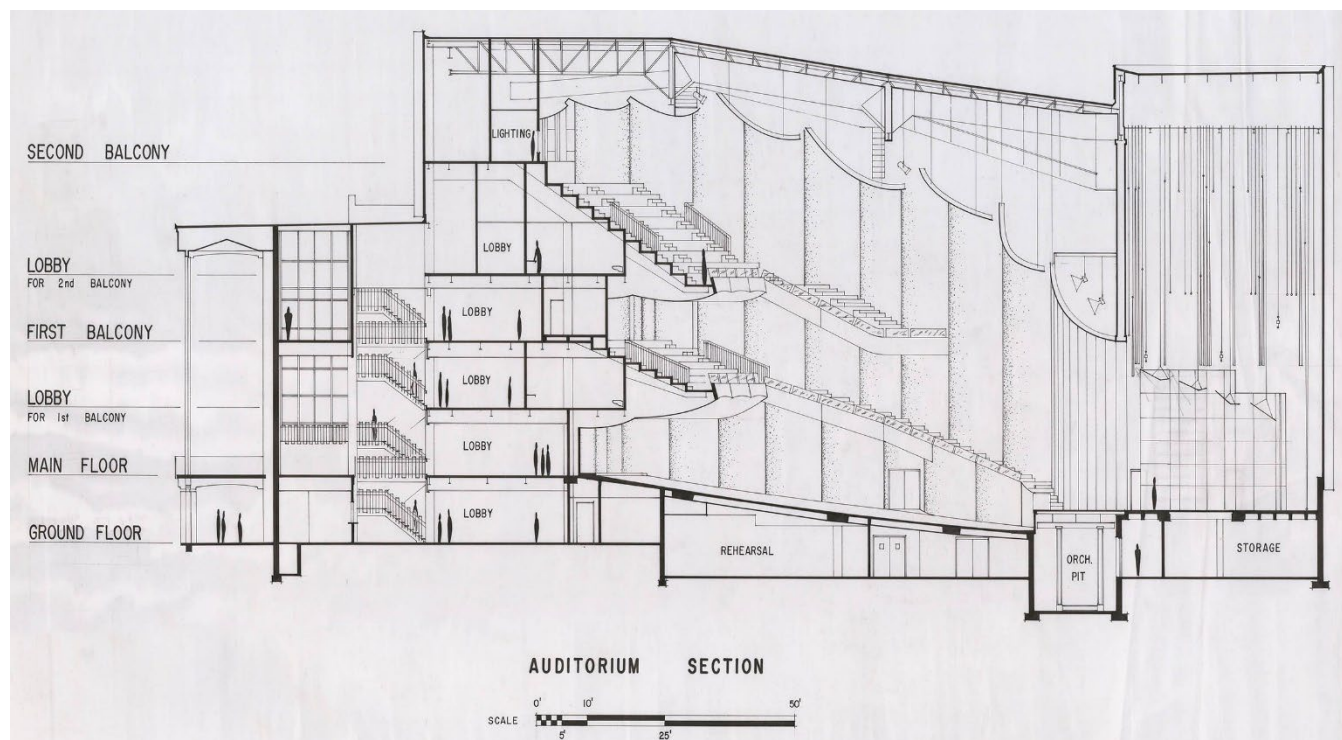


Figure 31 Auditorium section of the Chester Fritz Auditorium. Wells Denbrook Architectural Records.

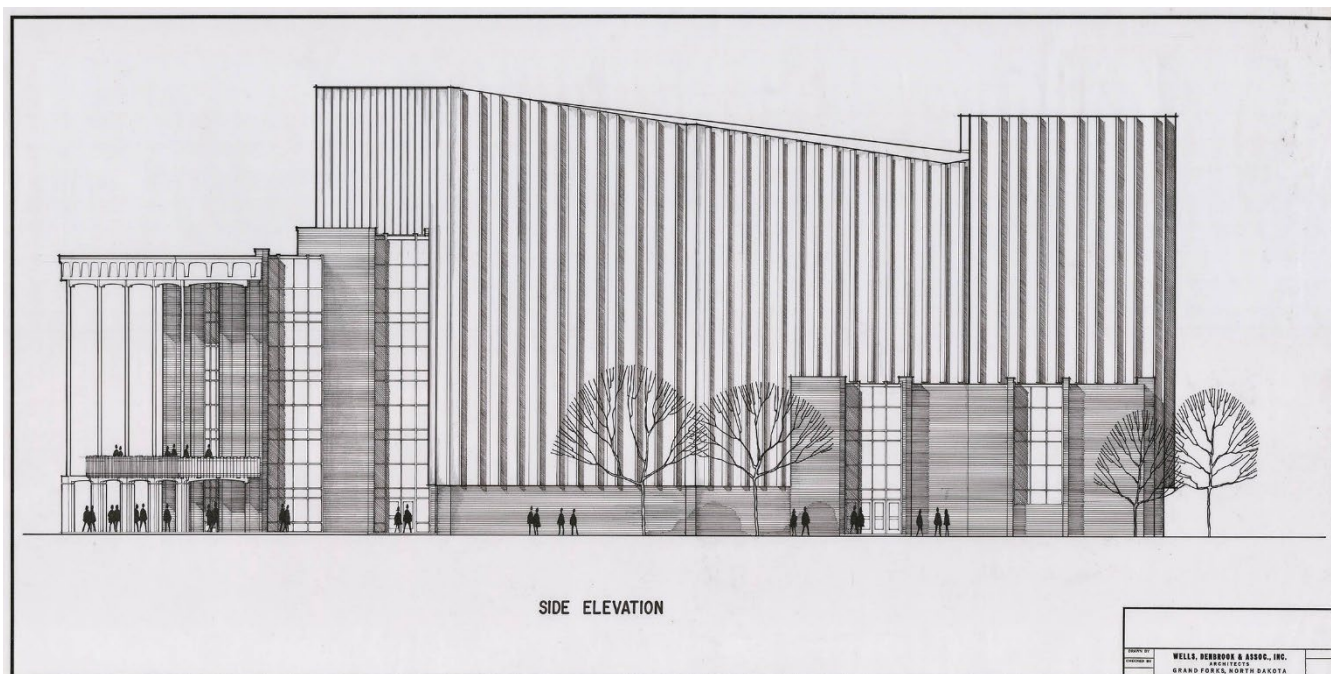


Figure 32 Side elevation of the Chester Fritz Auditorium. Wells Denbrook Architectural Records.



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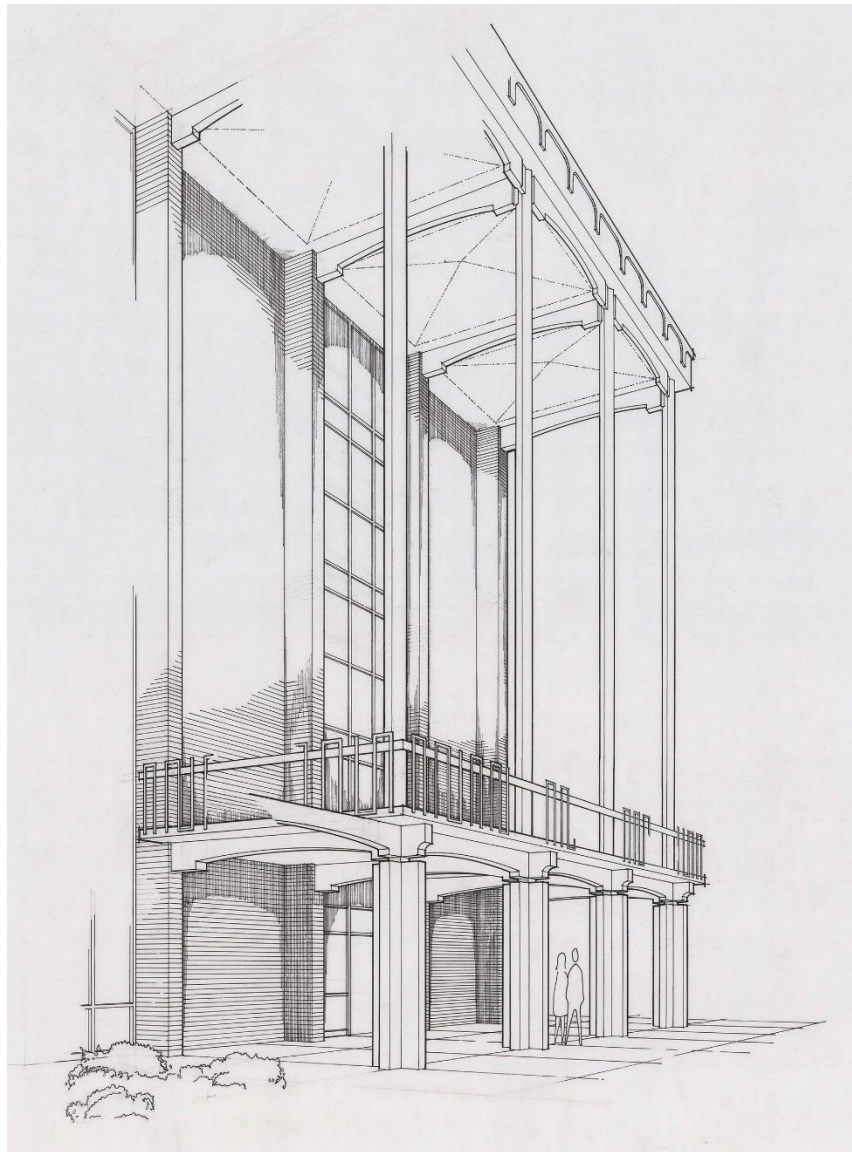
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**Figure 33** Exterior architectural rendering of the Chester Fritz Auditorium. Wells Denbrook Architectural Records.

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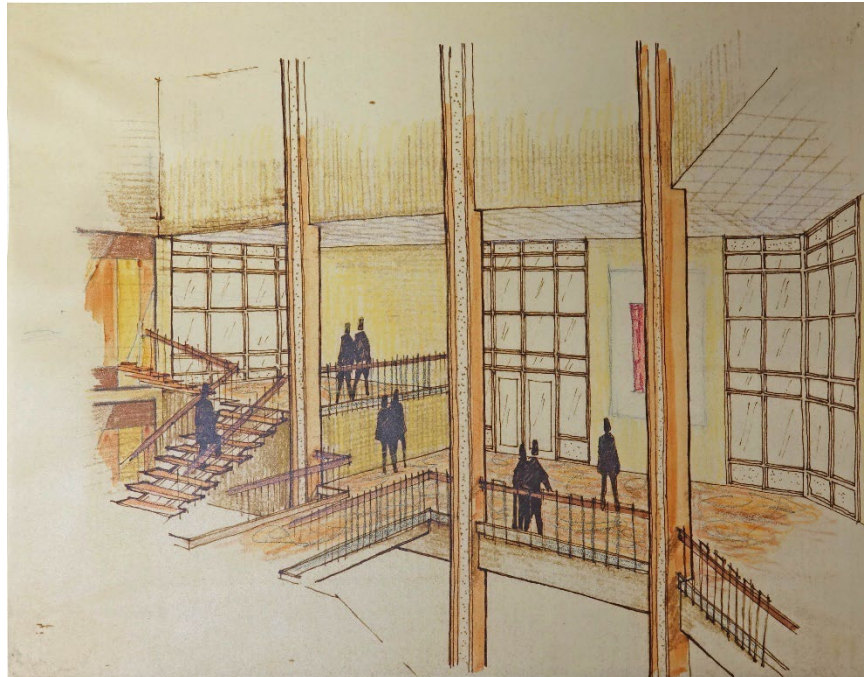
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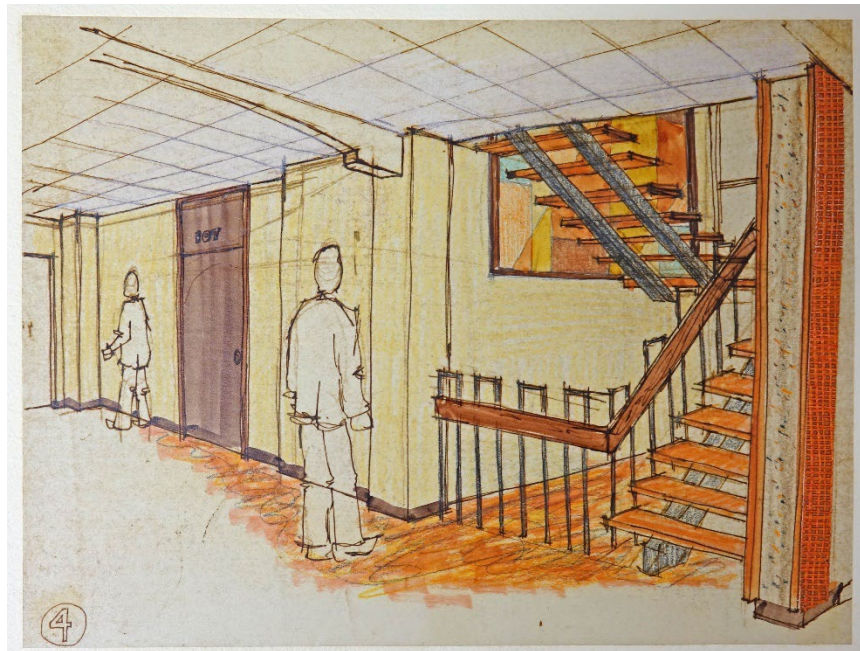
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**Figure 34** Interior architectural rendering of the Chester Fritz Auditorium, Lobby. Chester Fritz Auditorium Color Book, courtesy of the Chester Fritz Auditorium Records held at the Chester Fritz Auditorium.



**Figure 35** Interior architectural rendering of the Chester Fritz Auditorium, Lobby. Chester Fritz Auditorium Color Book, courtesy of the Chester Fritz Auditorium Records held at the Chester Fritz Auditorium.



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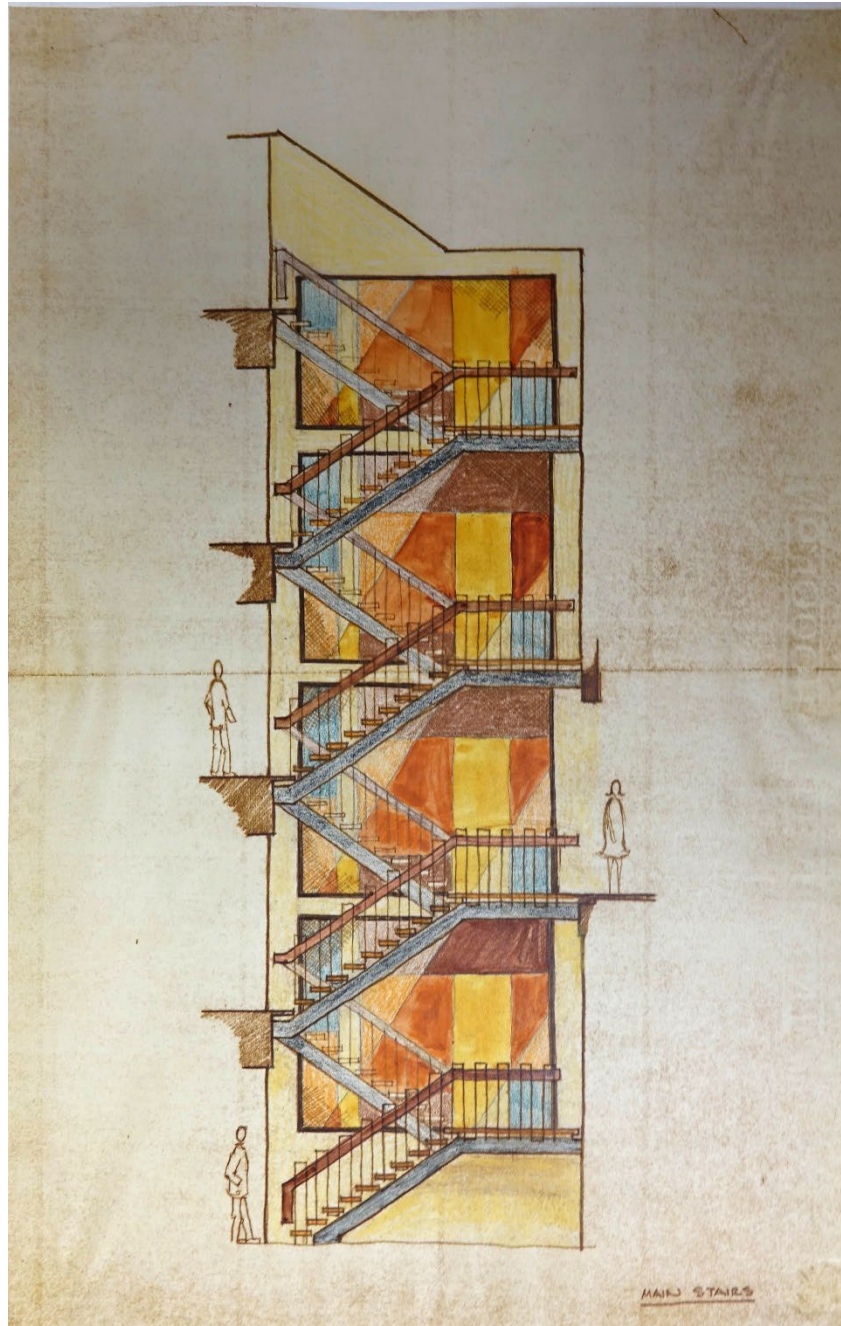
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**Figure 36** Interior architectural section rendering of the Chester Fritz Auditorium, Main stairs. Chester Fritz Auditorium Color Book, courtesy of the Chester Fritz Auditorium Records held at the Chester Fritz Auditorium.

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**Figure 37** Interior architectural rendering of the Chester Fritz Auditorium, Main house. Chester Fritz Auditorium Color Book, courtesy of the Chester Fritz Auditorium Records held at the Chester Fritz Auditorium.