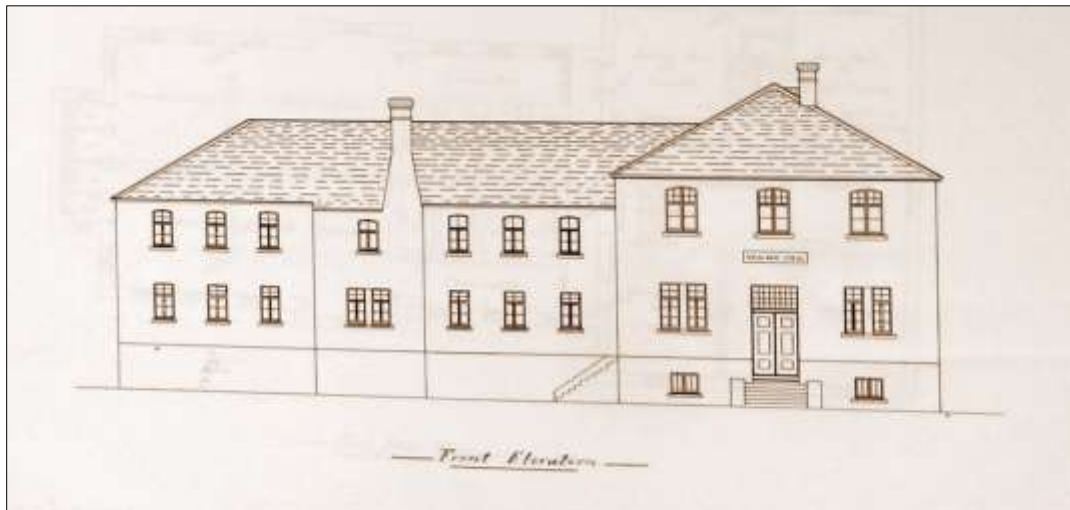


Preliminary Report on the North-West Territorial Jail and Lunatic Asylum Regina, Saskatchewan

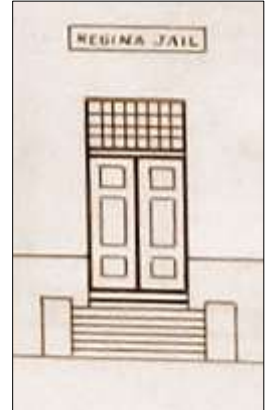
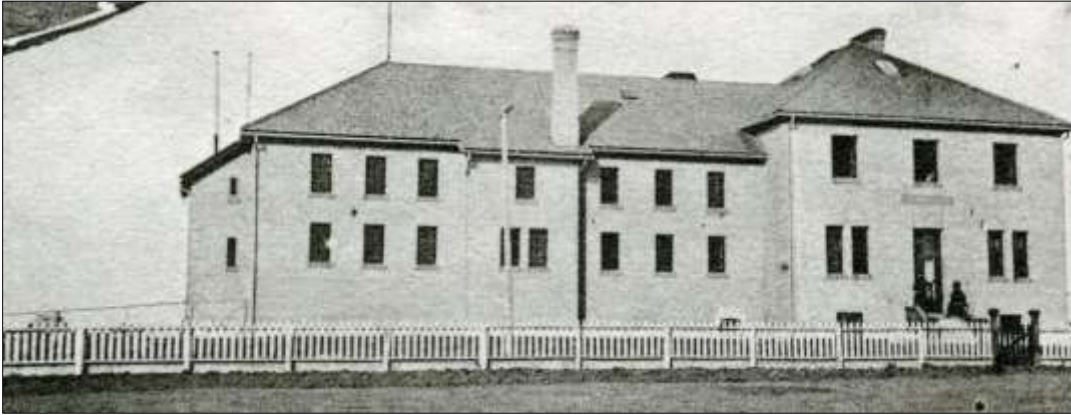


by

Frank Korvemaker

Version 6 – 2 February 2021

The North-West Territorial Jail and Lunatic Asylum, Regina

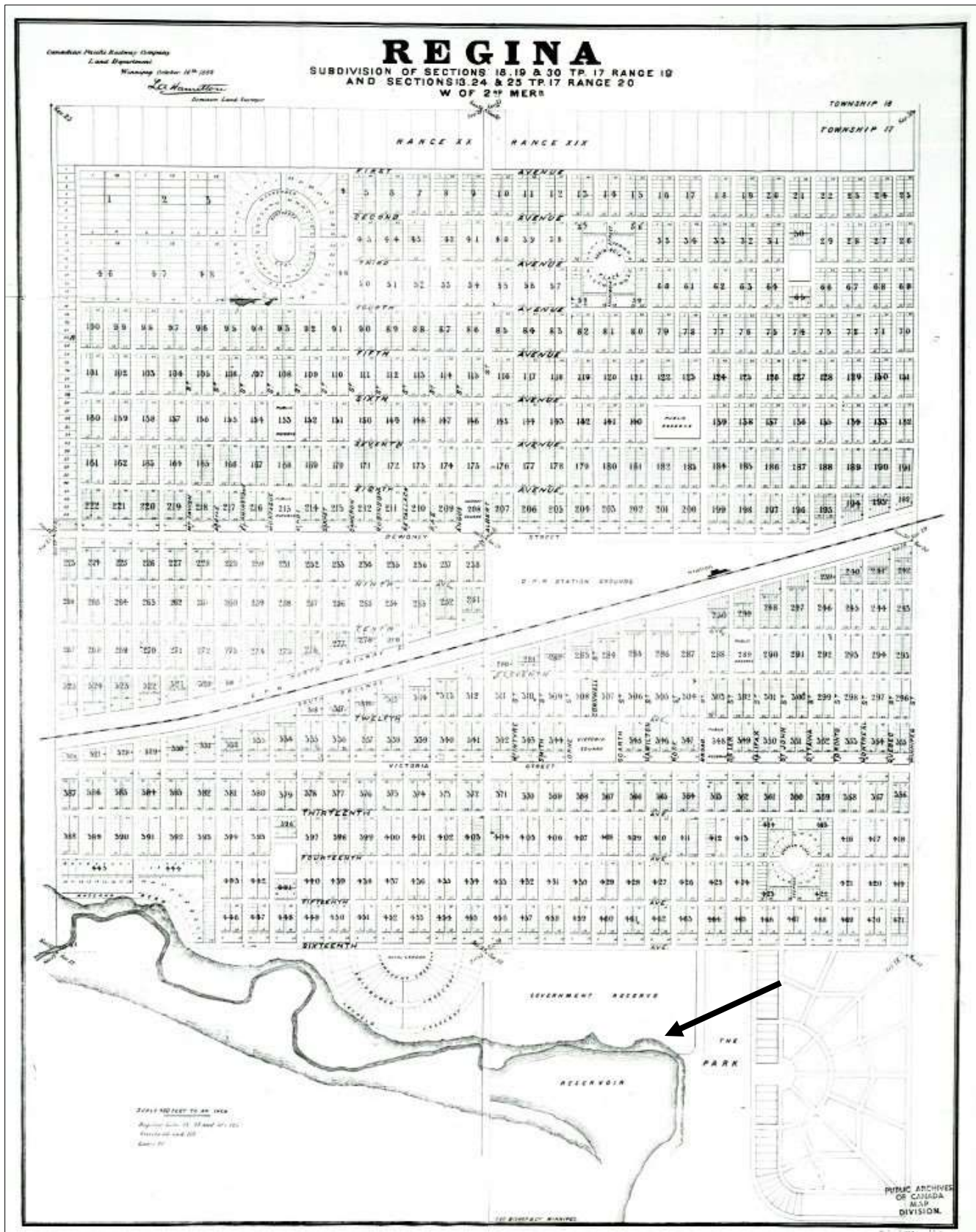


(Source: Prov. Archives of Sask. photo: R B-1238-8; architectural detail: R-P 6.2 Regina Jail, drawing # 1)



Aerial view of the Regina Jail from the top of the Legislative Building in 1913, showing the Jail Barn at the left (close to the lake), and the tree-enclosed garden area to the right. The new two-storey Normal School is located in the upper left. A long, low wooden building visible to the right of the Jail roof might be part of the farm complex, or relate to the Normal School. (Source: Prov. Archives of Sask. photo: R-A7733-1)

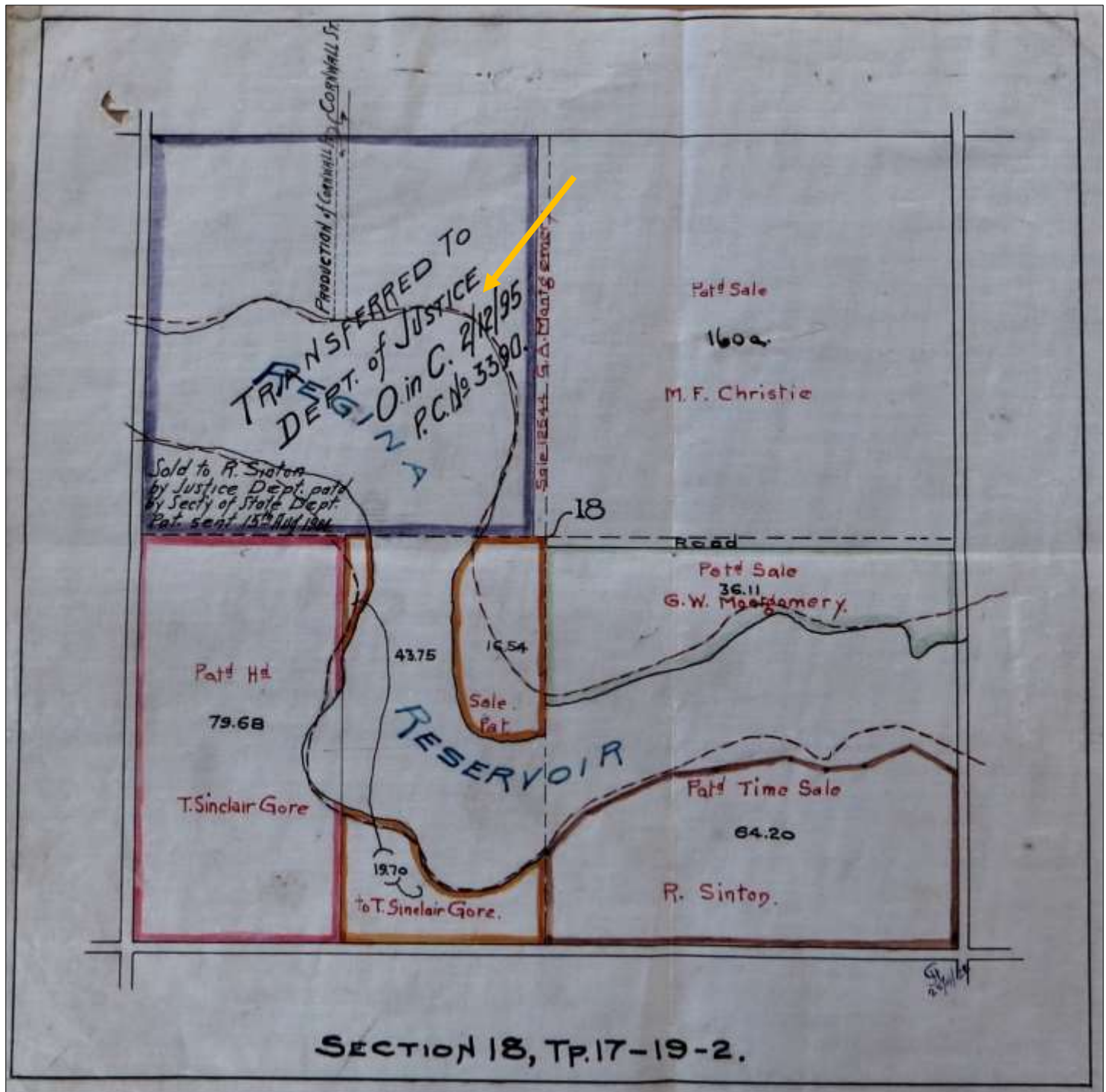
The Territorial Jail, dating back to 1885, was located near the SW corner of Broad Street and College Avenue, on the north shore of Wascana Lake. This land was designated as federal Government Reserve on the 1882 CPR Townsite Plan.



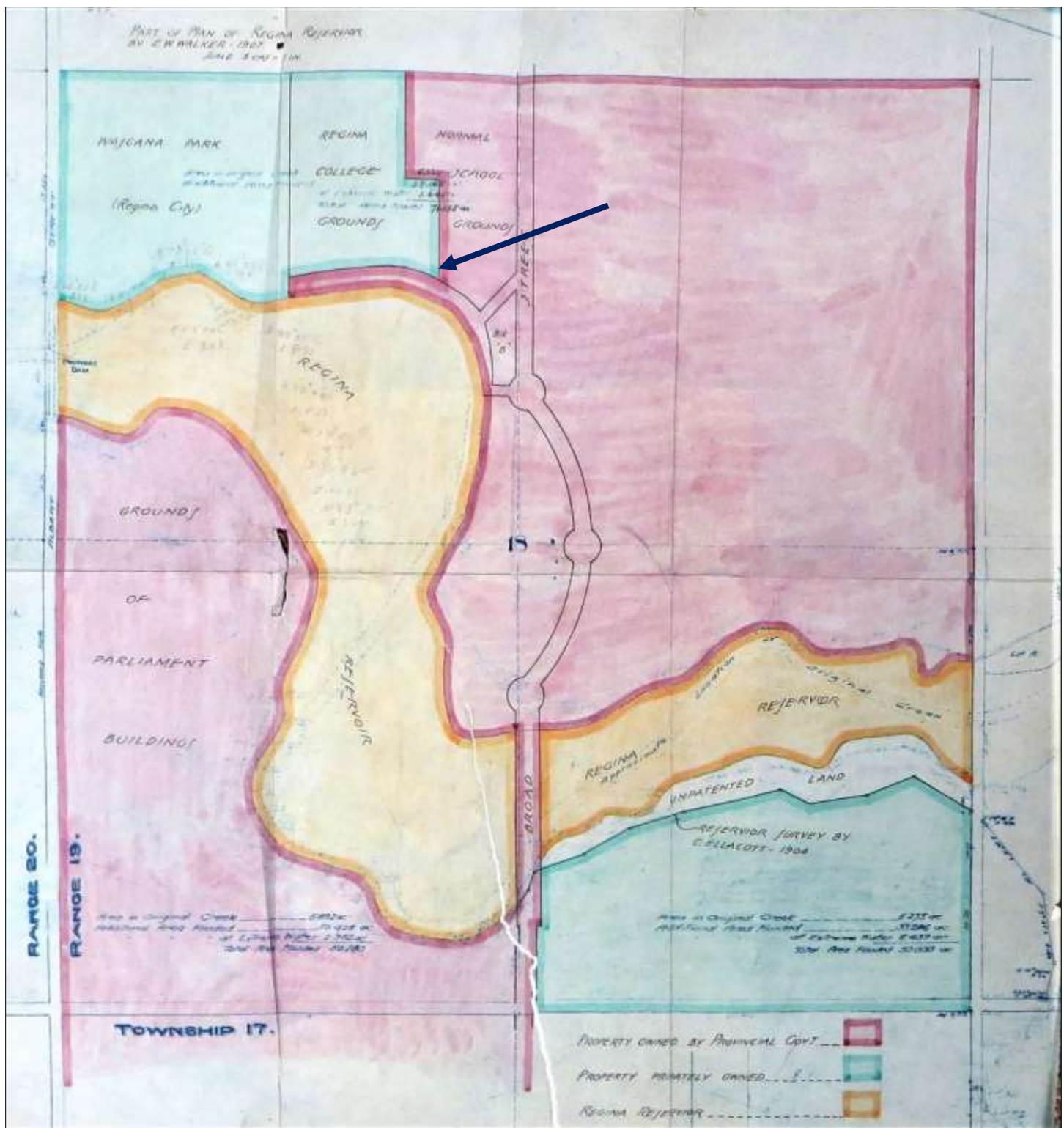
Arrow points to Territorial Jail location.

Source: *Regina Before Yesterday: A Visual History 1882-1945*, p. 27.

A significant portion of this property (NW quarter of Section 18, Township 17, Range 19, west of the 2nd meridian) – including the Jail complex - was transferred from the federal Department of the Interior to the Department of Justice in 1895. (The orange arrow below points to the site of the Territorial Jail complex.)



After creation of the Province of Saskatchewan in 1905, the federal Government Reserve north of Wascana Lake (bordered by Albert Street, College Avenue, and Broad Street, was transferred to the provincial government, which in turn transferred or sold the western half to the City of Regina for use as a park, and the western half of the Department of Justice lands to Regina College; retaining the eastern half for use by the proposed new Normal School. It appears that the southern portion of the latter two segments also included the Territorial Jail complex (dark blue arrow shown on the 1907 plan below).



The Territorial Jail complex also included several subordinate structures, such as cottages for some of the employees, a large barn, an associated garden, a well and well house, a cesspool, and some underground utilities linking the site to Wascana Lake. Some of these features are identified in the federal Dept. of Public Works Annual Reports (listed below), others are not. For all intents and purposes, it was a self-sustaining community, situated a considerable distance from downtown Regina, at the extreme south end of the town. (No examination of any Dept. of Justice annual reports has yet been undertaken for references to this complex.) Other historical documents relating to the site include architectural drawings, photographs and newspaper reports.

DOMINION LUNATIC ASYLUM.

At the Session of 1883 the sum of \$20,000.00 was voted towards the establishment of a Dominion Lunatic Asylum or Hospital in the North-West; but up to the close of the fiscal year a site had not been selected, and no expenditure had taken place.

1884 P 57

Sessional Papers (10), 1885, p. lvii:



Notice to Contractors

SEALED TENDERS addressed to the undersigned, and endorsed "Tender for Jail, &c., Regina, N.W.T." will be received until Tuesday, the 28th day of April next, inclusive, for the erection of

JAIL AND LUNATIC ASYLUM

AT

REGINA, N.W.T.

Plans and specification can be seen at the Department of Public Works, Ottawa, at the Sheriff's Office, Court House, Regina, and at the Public Works Office, Winnipeg, Man., on and after Monday, the 6th April.

Persons tendering are notified that tenders will not be considered unless made on the printed forms supplied, and signed with their actual signatures.

Each tender must be accompanied by an accepted bank cheque, made payable to the order of the Honourable the Minister of Public Works, equal to five per cent. of the amount of the tender, which will be forfeited if the party decline to enter into a contract when called on to do so, or if he fail to complete the work contracted for. If the tender be not accepted the cheque will be returned.

The Department will not be bound to accept the lowest or any tender.

By order,

A. GODELL,

Secretary.

Department of Public Works,
Ottawa, March 28, 1885.

Qu'Appelle Vidette, 16 April 1885 – Call for Tenders to build the jail, issued from Ottawa on March 28, 1885.

Mr. W. Henderson, Clerk of Public Works, N.W.T.,—arrived in town on Friday morning's train to confer with Mr. Sheriff Chapleau with regard to the Public Buildings. So far as we can gather, the Gaol will be erected on Victoria Square, the block between Cornwall and Lorne Streets being reserved for that purpose. The new Indian Office will also probably be in the same locality. The hauling of stone for the foundations will commence at once.

Qu'Appelle Vidette, 16 April 1885 – speculation of Jail site – in Victoria Park.

—A carload of window-sill slabs arrived here on Friday for the new post-office and gaol. The slabs are taken from a fine freestone quarry about five miles west of Calgary by the C.P.C. They are prepared and hewn before shipment and measure from three to five feet in length with a breadth and thickness of 12 x 8.

Regina Leader, 13 August 1885 – Calgary sandstone, quarried at Shaganappi Point, arrives for the new Regina Post Office and Jail (Gaol).

JAIL AND LUNATIC ASYLUM.

At the Session of 1884 the sum of \$10,000.00 was voted towards the construction of a Dominion Lunatic Asylum and Jail, and at the same Session the sum of \$10,000.00 was voted for building new jails in the North-West. Plans and specifications for a jail and asylum were prepared by the Department, and, on 2nd June, 1885, a contract was entered into with Messrs. J. E. Gelley & Co., for the sum of \$15,877.00, and at the close of the fiscal year the work was well under way. The building will be of brick on a stone foundation. Its extreme length will be 113 feet, and it will consist of the administrative block, 40 feet long by 50 feet wide, and a cell wing, both being two stories high. A full description of the building will be found in Appendix No. 2, page 38. Expenditure, \$12,946.86.

Sessional Papers (12), 1886 p. cx – confirming that J.E. Gelley & Co. were awarded the jail construction tender.

Regina DOMINION GAOL AND LUNATIC ASYLUM.
Completed and occupied.
Heating is by stoves.

1886 p35

Sessional Papers (12), 1886 p. 35

REGINA.

DOMINION GAOL AND LUNATIC ASYLUM.

Plans and specifications were prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Justice, and a contract was entered into on 2nd June, 1885, for the erection of this building on the Government reserve.

The building will be 113 feet in extreme length, and consist of the administrative block, 40 feet long by 50 feet in breadth, consisting of basement and two stories, having on the ground floor reception and mess rooms, office, bedroom and kitchen, and on first floor surgery, matron's room, sick wards and dining rooms for insane and convicts; in the rear and abutting this is the cell wing, 66 feet long by 36 feet in width, two stories in height, containing on the ground floor twenty cells 4 feet by 8 feet, in two series, back to back, surrounded by a corridor, and on the first floor eight similar cells, besides a ward each for male and female insane, and two wards for female convicts; at the extreme end of the cell wing are the W.C's.

The cell wing is intended to be one of three similar blocks, the two others to be placed one on each side of the administrative block.

The walls will be brick, on a stone foundation; the ceilings of cells of arched brick work; the floors of the administrative portion and the roofs throughout are to be of wood; shingled.

Plans, &c., prepared by this Department.

Clerk of Works, Mr. Wm. Henderson.

Contractors, Messrs. Gelley & Soucisse.

Sessional Papers (12), 1886 p. 38

JAIL AND LUNATIC ASYLUM.

At the Session of 1885 the sum of \$15,000.00 was voted towards the completion of this building, a full description of which will be found in last year's report; at the Session of 1886 a further sum of \$11,500.00 was granted, and the unexpended balance of appropriation for 1884-85, \$5,640.00, was carried forward, so that the whole amount available was \$32,140.00. On 19th October, 1885, a contract was entered into with Messrs. J. E. Gelley & Co., for the iron work needed in connection with this building, for the sum of \$4,991.00. The building has been completed and occupied. Expenditure during the fiscal year, \$31,975.73. Total expenditure on this building, \$44,922.59.

Sessional Papers (11), 1887 p. cviii

JAIL AND LUNATIC ASYLUM.

At the Session of 1886 the sum of \$7,000.00 was voted towards the completion of this building, a full description of which will be found in my report for 1884-85. The building has been completed. Expenditure during the fiscal year, \$1,663.27. Total expenditure on this building, \$46,588.86.

Sessional Papers (7), 1888 p. cxiii

JAIL AND LUNATIC ASYLUM.

Fences and outbuildings were erected, a well-house was built, and a force pump put in building.

Resident Clerk of Works, Mr. Jno. Morrison.

Sessional Papers (9), 1889 p. 46

JAIL AND LUNATIC ASYLUM.

Minor alterations of the ground floor portion of Jailor's apartments and offices were made, an iron staircase built between ground and first floor of jail, and iron doors, one in wall between prison and Jailor's apartments, and the other in wall between basement and yard.

Resident Clerk of Works, Mr. H. T. Peters.

Sessional Papers (18), 1890 p. 41

GAOL AND LUNATIC ASYLUM.

A cess pit, 15 feet by 10 feet by 8 feet, was formed 150 feet west of the building and the drain connected with it.

A water system, to supply from the Wascana Dam, and a steam heating and cooking service, are nearly completed; a boiler house, and two pairs of cottages, the latter for gaol officials, are in course of construction. The well has been cleaned and repaired, and a new pump put in.

Works carried out under the supervision of this Department.

Clerk of Works, Mr. H. J. Peters.

Sessional Papers (9), 1891 p. 46

GAOL AND LUNATIC ASYLUM.

The soft water system, the boiler-house and the two pairs of cottages mentioned in my report of last year were completed, the cottages being occupied.

A boiler plate flooring has been laid on top of ceiling joists of prison to prevent escape through ceiling.

Works carried out under the supervision of this Department.

Clerks of works, Mr. H. J. Peters, Regina.

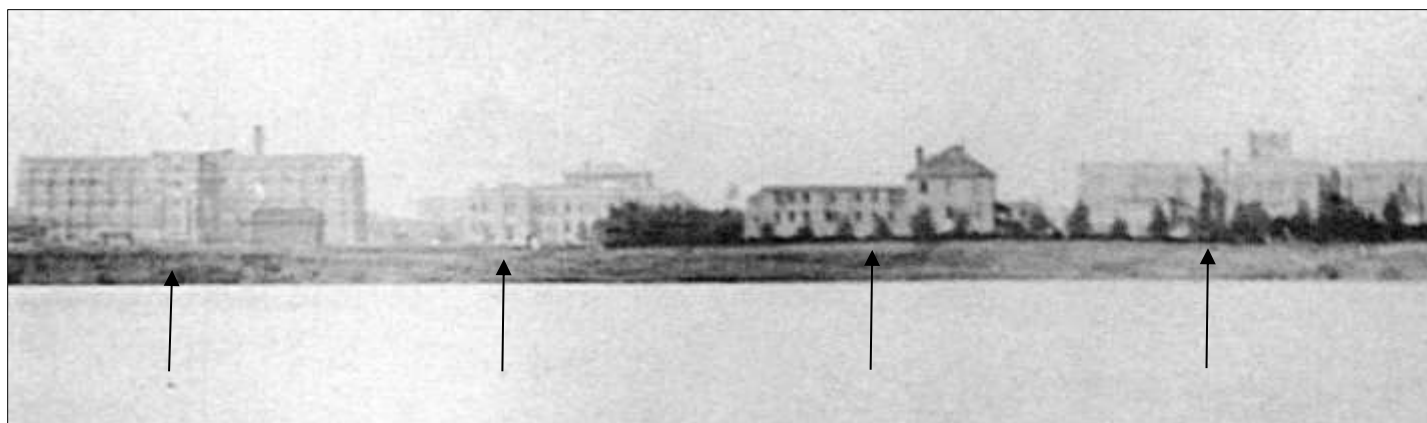
Sessional Papers (8), 1892 p. 41

In 1887, John Powers described the jail in his book: *The History of Regina*, p. 83:

"That fine building on the north edge of the lake is the new gaol and lunatic asylum. There seems to be a dearth of prisoners and lunatics in the Northwest, at present. Splendid climate, etc."

Later, Earl Drake wrote in his 1955 book: *Regina: The Queen City*, p. 58:

"In 1886, Governor Dewdney built a toboggan slide west of his residence on the bank of the creek. This gave some of the young athletes like Walter Scott an idea, and next fall they formed a committee which collected over two hundred dollars by a town canvass. The toboggan club erected a timbre slide across from the Land Titles Office. After climbing forty feet to the top, tobogganers slid down one hundred and twenty feet and then glided on an icy run out to the jail at the lake."



College Building

Central Collegiate

Regina Jail

Normal School

(Source: Prov. Archives of Sask. photo: R B-6,160 – ca. 1914)

In 1907, an inspection of the Territorial Jail revealed a number of structural problems, as detailed in this report, included in the 1907-08 Annual Report for the Saskatchewan Department of Public Works, p. 155:

Regina Jail.

Upon examination of this building it was discovered that several serious fractures had occurred in the main walls and also in the partition walls and arches. It was noticed that the building was continually settling and the fractures were growing larger and in view of the fact that very heavy construction was being carried upon the basement walls it was decided that it was unsafe to allow the building to be occupied any longer as a jail. To provide accommodation for the prisoners then confined there, the administrative portion of the building was altered to provide accommodation for 36 prisoners and a residence was found for the jailer on Osler street. Two temporary offices were erected on either side of the building to accommodate the jailer and the deputy. The plumbing and heating plants were arranged to suit the alterations. Arrangements are being made to reconstruct the interior portion of the cell wing so that it may again be used for the prisoners until such time as further accommodation is provided.

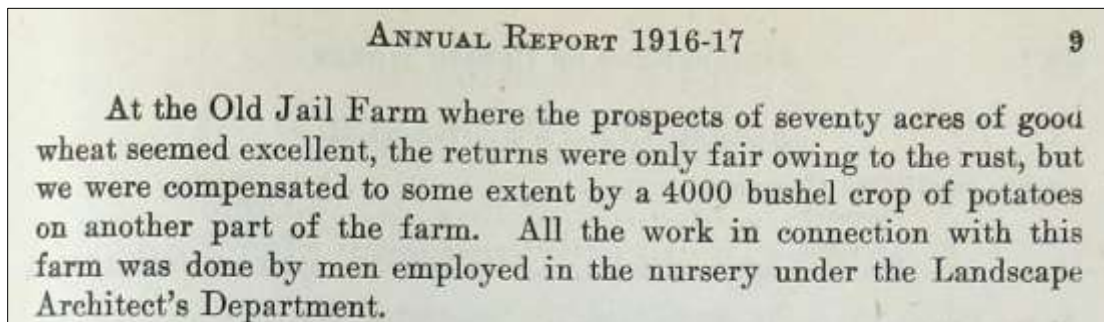
Consequently, it comes as no surprise that plans were soon initiated for construction of a new Provincial Jail, and probably that the site of this would be at a location where the soil stability was deemed better than that on the north shore of Wascana Lake. Construction of the new Jail, northeast of the City, began in 1913 and, according to the 1914-15 annual report for the Department of Public Works:

“Progress on the New Jail had been steadily maintained throughout the summer of 1914. The preliminary occupation began in September, and the building was finally taken over by the department on May 8, 1915, on which date all prisoners from the old jail were transferred.”

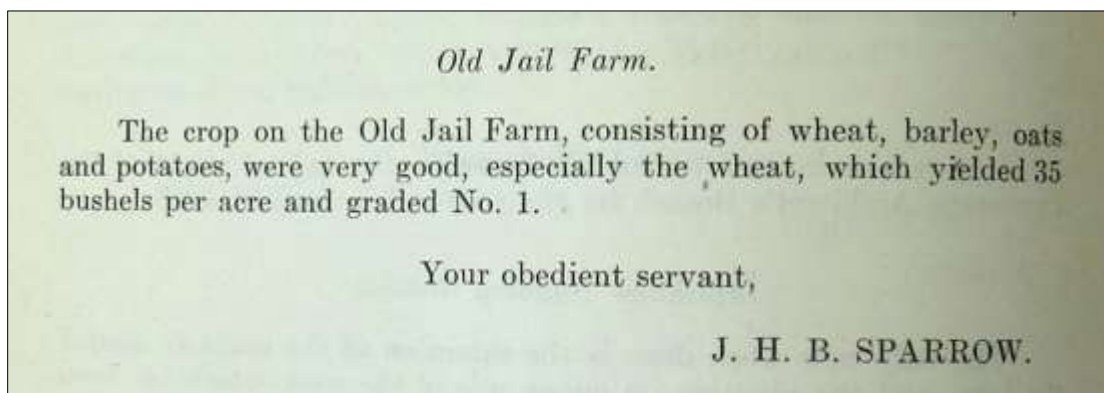


Architectural drawing for the new Provincial Jail, Regina, by Storey and Van Egmond, opened 1913.

The old jail was demolished sometime after that date, perhaps around 1920. However, the associated farm operations continued for some years, at least until 1919, as the broken land was deemed useful for growing crops for use in other provincial government institutional facilities, as evidenced by the following entries:



(Source: DPW Annual Report: 1916-17, p. 9)



(Source: DPW Annual Report: 1917-18, p. 58)

Old Jail Farm.

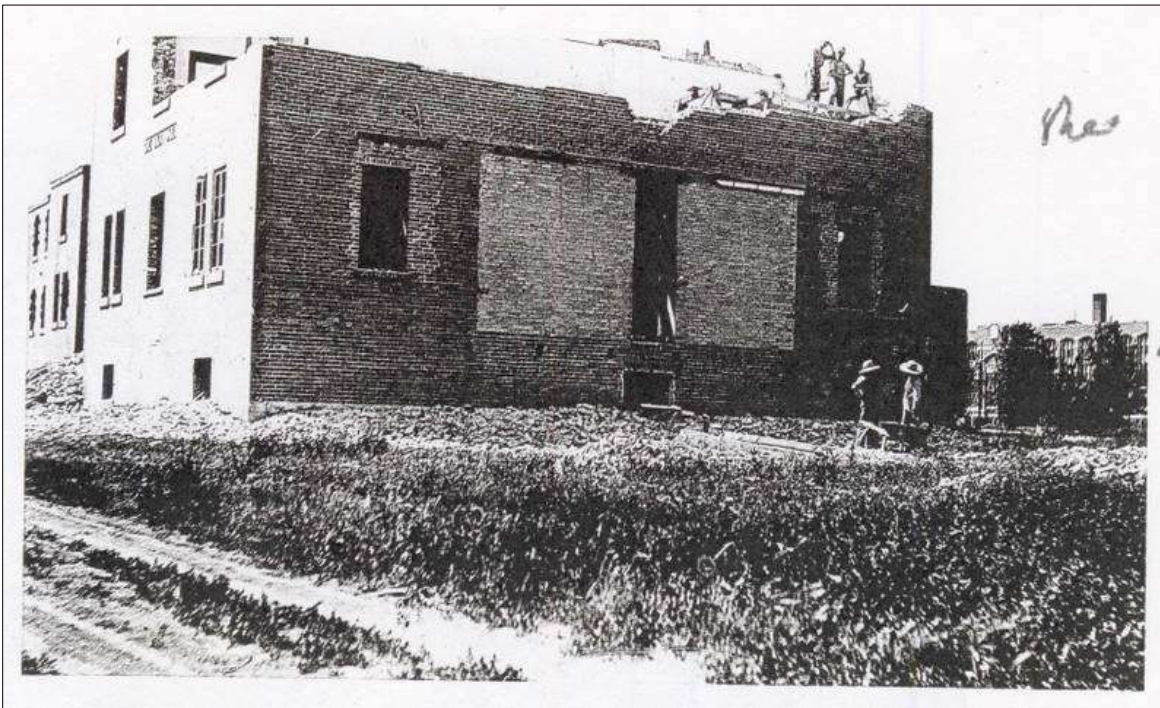
The crop on the old Jail Farm was fairly good, wheat, oats and potatoes were grown, and we were able to ship two carloads of potatoes to Battleford Asylum besides supplying the three homes in Regina.

Your obedient servant,

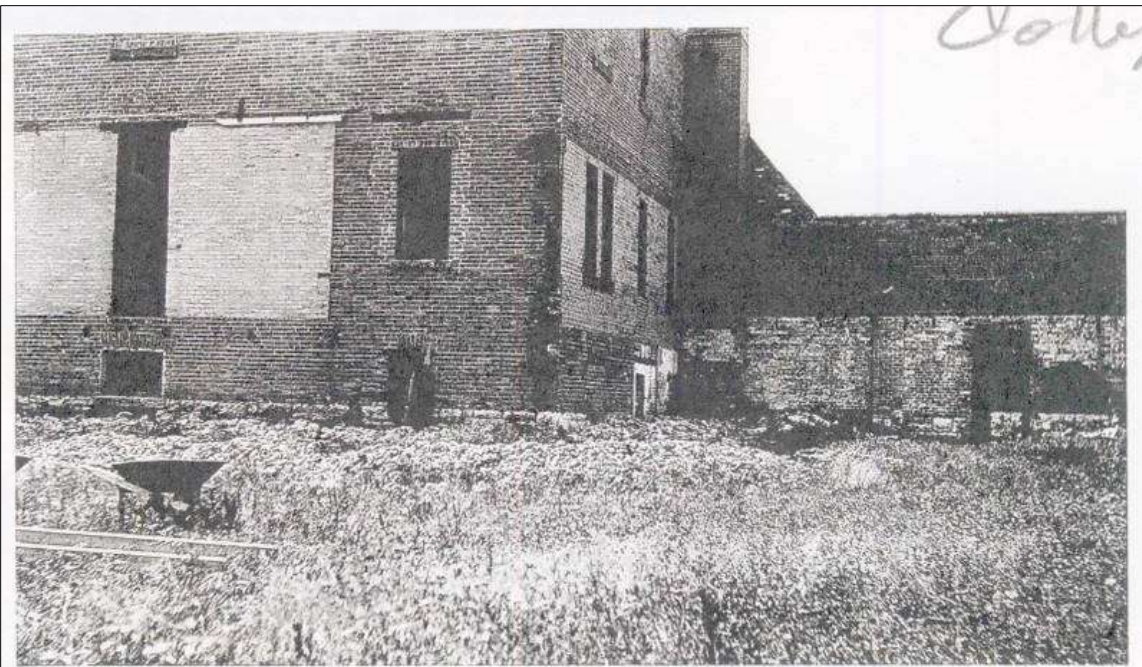
J. H. B. SPARROW,

(Source: DPW Annual Report: 1918-19, p. 63.)

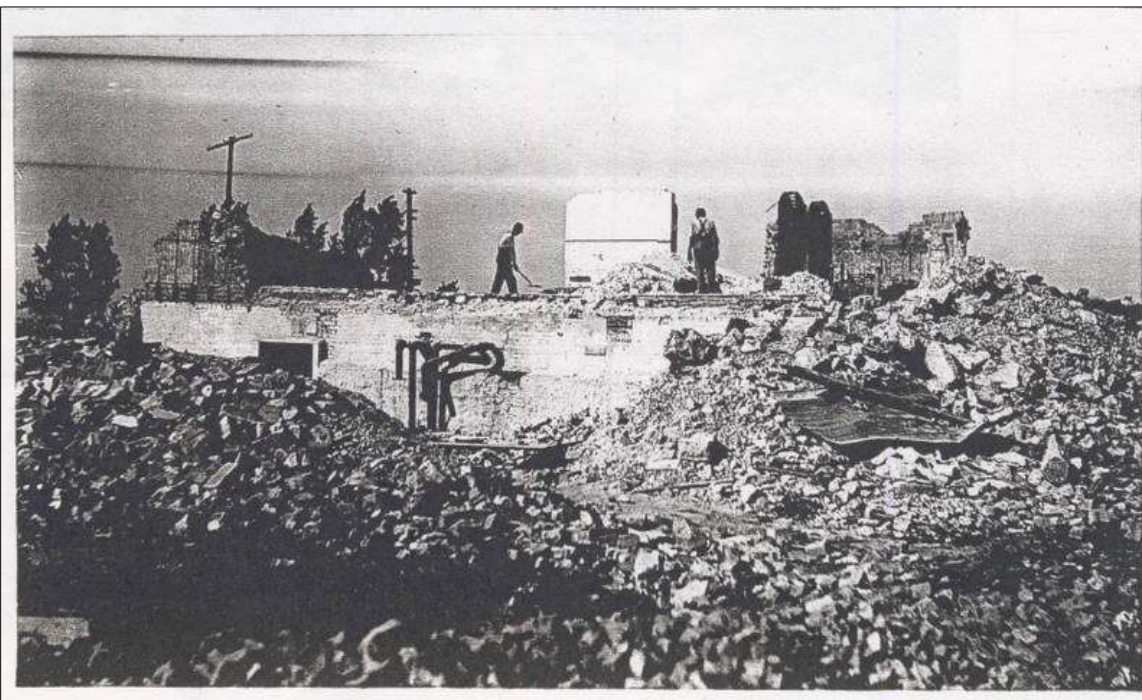
Although no textual details have yet been found confirming exactly when the Old Jail was demolished, five photographs showing that activity have been found in the Provincial Archives (Mary Spokes Collection; R98-210), with a notation suggesting that this occurred around 1920.



Demolition of the Old Regina Jail, on the north shore of Wascana Lake, c.1920



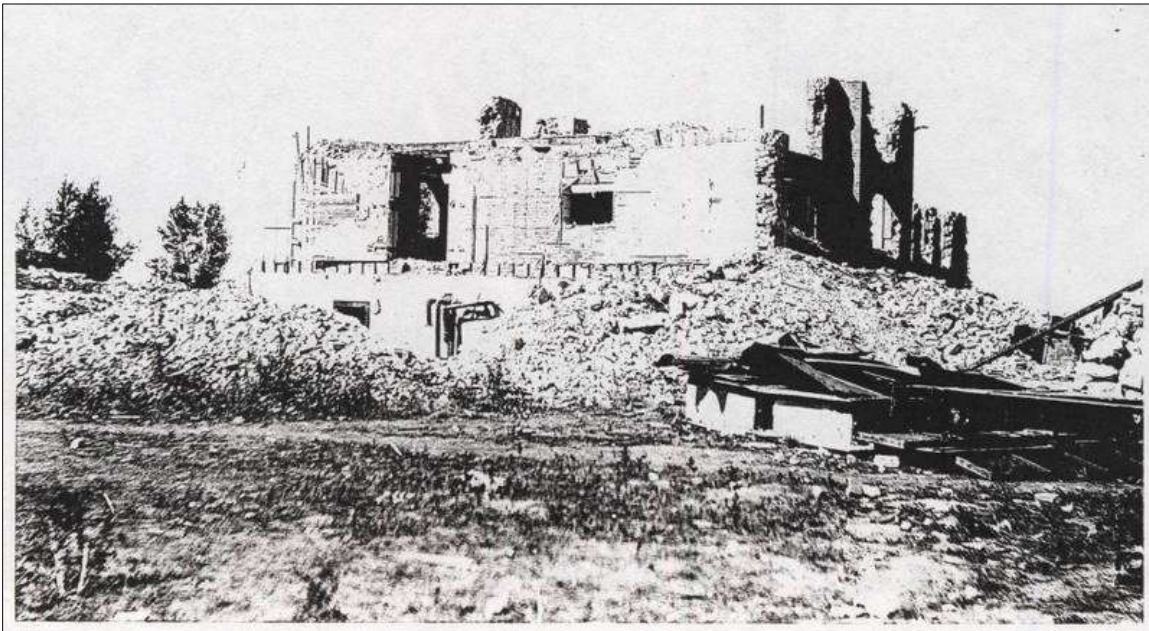
Demolition of the Old Regina Jail, on the north shore of Wascana Lake, c.1920



Demolition of the Old Regina Jail, on the north shore of Wascana Lake, c.1920



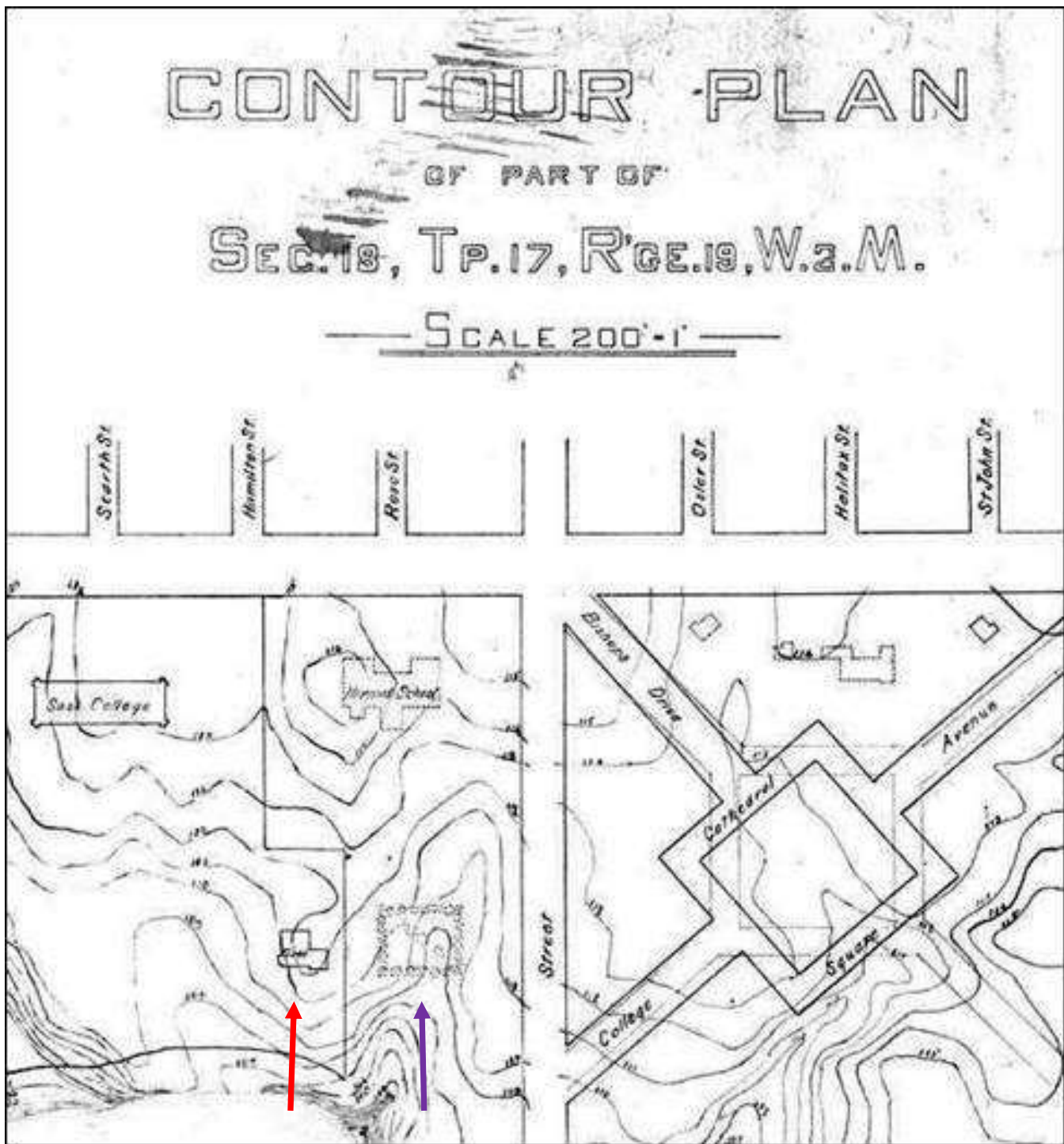
Demolition of the Old Regina Jail, on the north shore of Wascana Lake, c.1920



Demolition of the Old Regina Jail, on the north shore of Wascana Lake, c.1920

In keeping with the procedures of the time, any below ground-level foundations would probably have been buried, not removed. Those ruins might have been impacted by temporary wartime construction (1939-45) and post 1950s building and road construction; however, they should be explored if any new development occurs in that area. There is historical data to be gleaned from that site which is not available in any known archival sources. That information would better help us to understand how such facilities were designed, built and operated. The Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan has some plans and photos of the complex, which could help to make this a very interesting urban archaeology project, as well as an excellent tourist attraction in Wascana Park.

Following is a sample of what stood there until shortly after the new Provincial Jail was built in 1913-15.



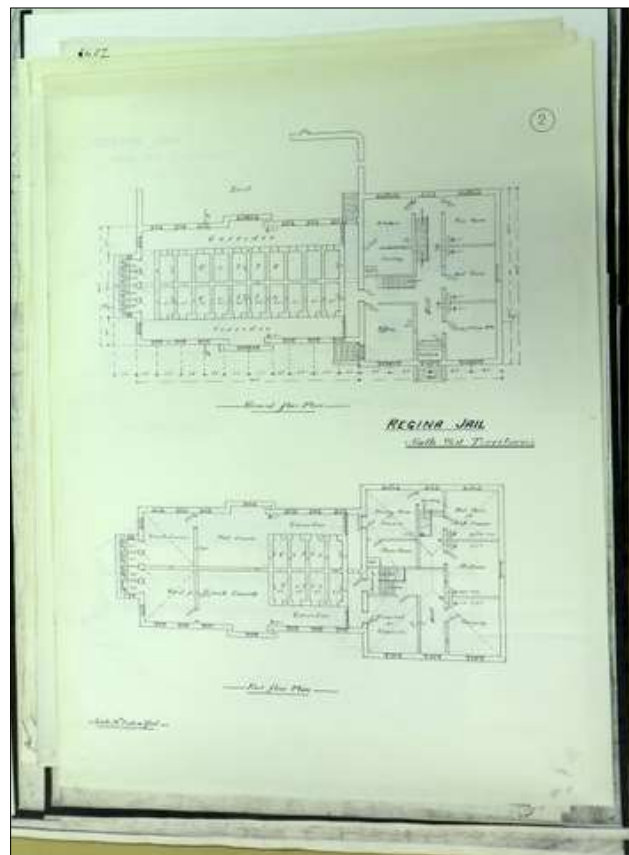
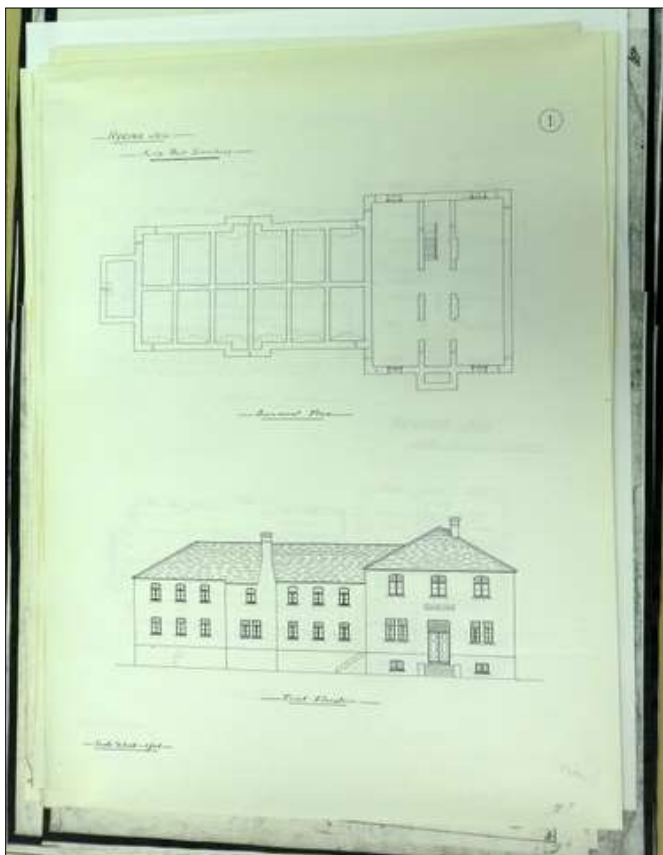
1913 Plan showing location of the Regina Jail (**red arrow**) and possible farm area (**purple arrow**) between the southward extension of Hamilton and Rose Streets, almost due west of Broadway Ave., and the Diocese of Qu'Appelle complex on the east side of Broad Street. The location of Regina [Sask.] College and the Normal School (now Saskatchewan Sound Stage) help to better identify the prison location. However, the associated prison residences and farm buildings are not shown.

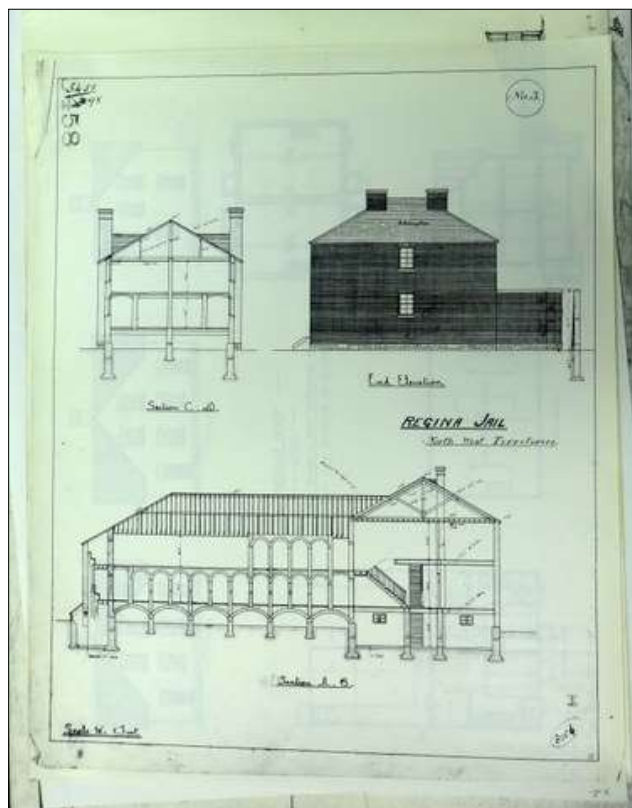
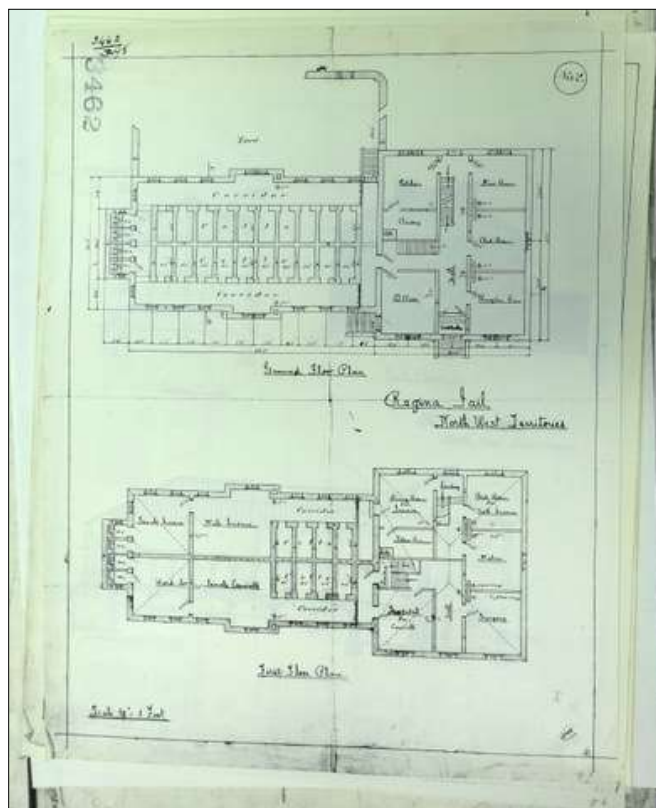
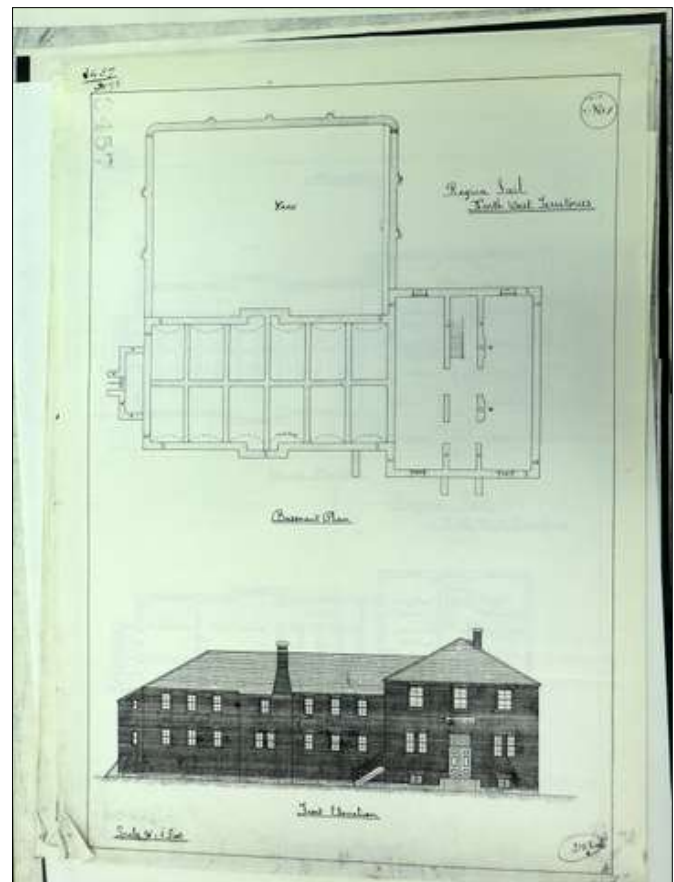
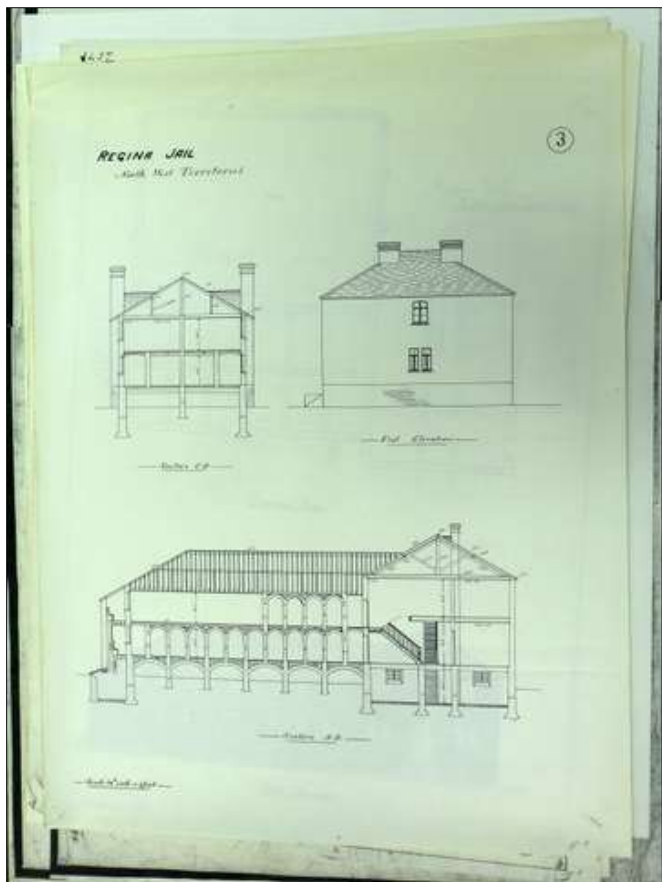
(Source: Don Black correspondence, 5 March 2014)

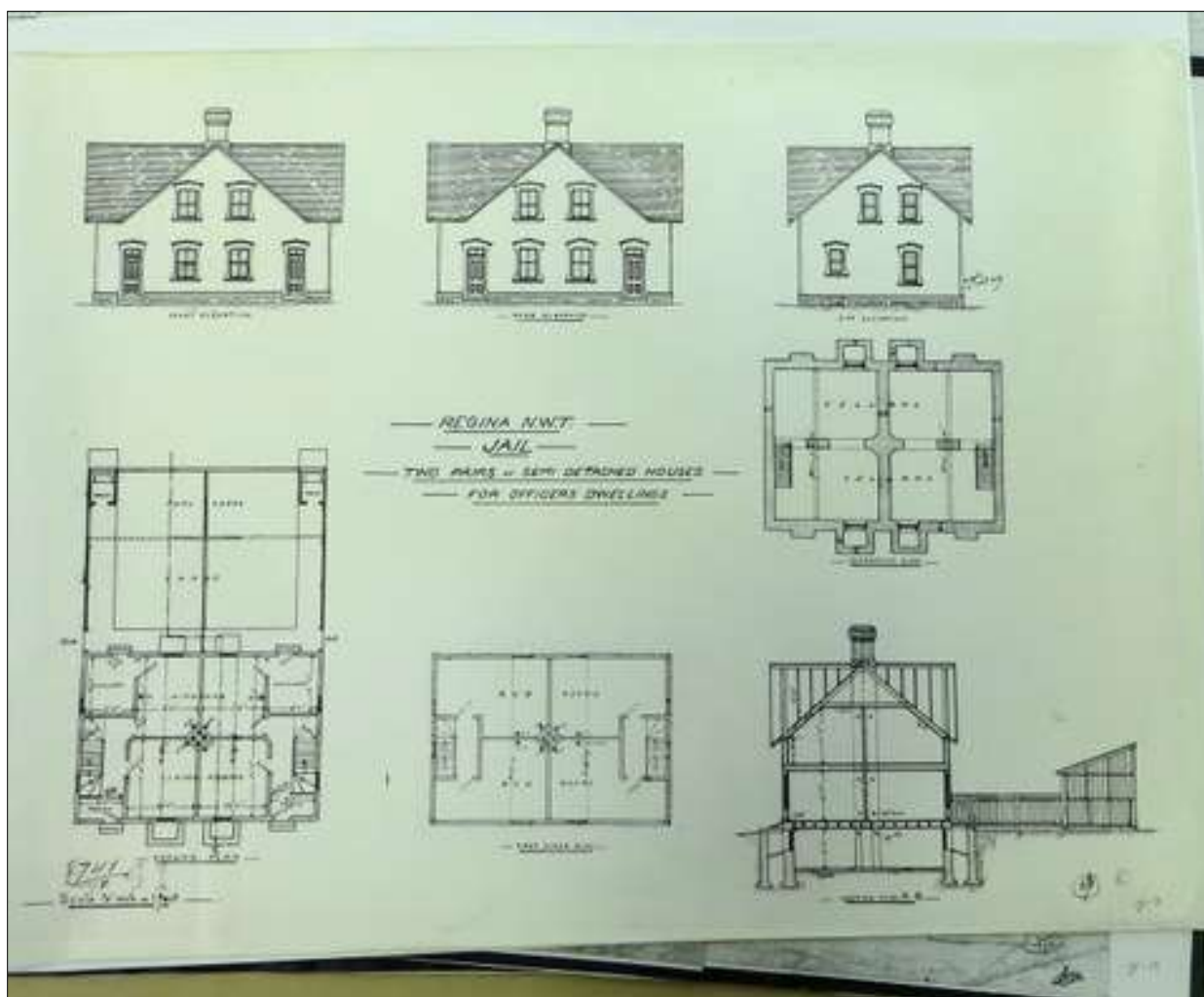


Approximate location for the Regina Jail (yellow arrow), approximately due west of the CNIB Building; the exact location of the associated Jail Farm buildings and grounds has not yet been determined.

Following are a series of architectural drawings of the Regina Jail and accompanying residences, prepared by the Department of Public Works, Ottawa in the mid 1880s, under the direction of Thomas Fuller, Chief Architect of Canada from 1881-1896.







Architectural Drawings of the Regina Jail and accompanying residences:

(Source: Provincial Archives of Sask: Ref: R-P 6.2 Regina Jail, North-West Territories)



Front of NWT Jail, Regina – south entry and cells on the left and view of the Jail from Wascana Lake. Note: On the right photo, the hipped roof of the cells area appears to have been removed or was in process of being demolished.

(Source: e-mail from Don Black, 26 Feb. 2014 [left]

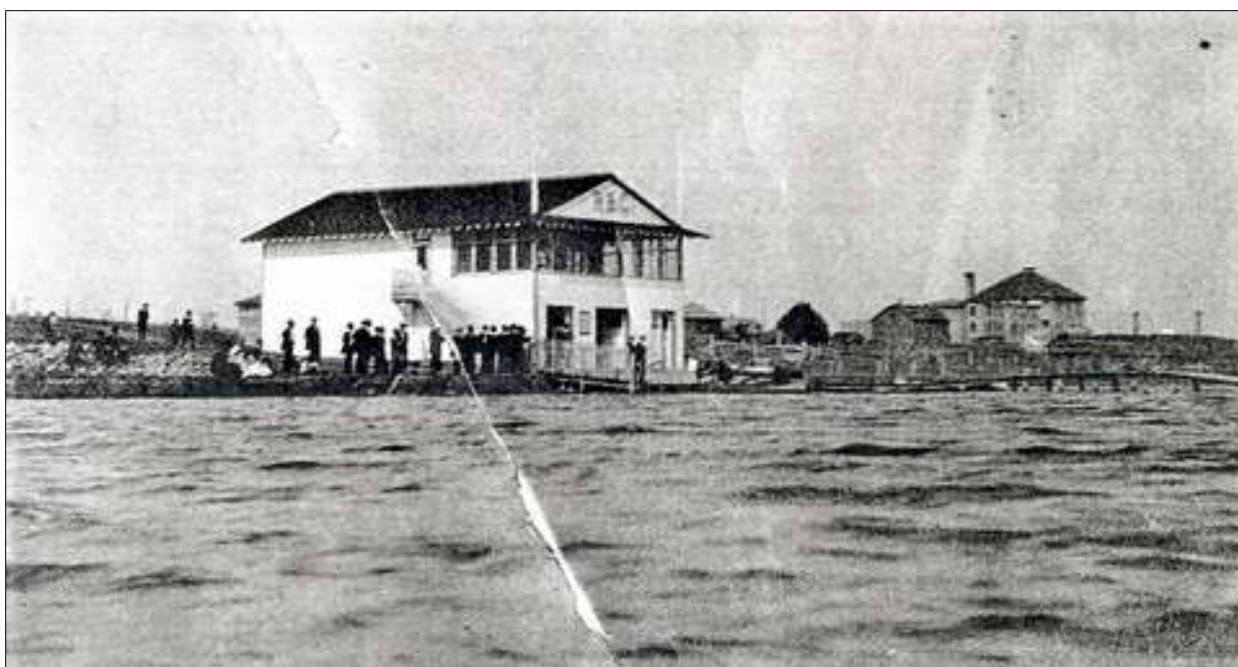
and

20 Dec. 2009 [right])



Building the foundations for Central Collegiate (foreground), with the Jail and Jail Barn in the background, as well as the Legislative Building at the far right.

(Source: Sask Archives: R-A6078)



Regina Boathouse, with the Jail and farm complex to the right. – c.1910 – perhaps closer to 1915 as the jail was not vacated until that year.

(Source: Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan: R A-378)

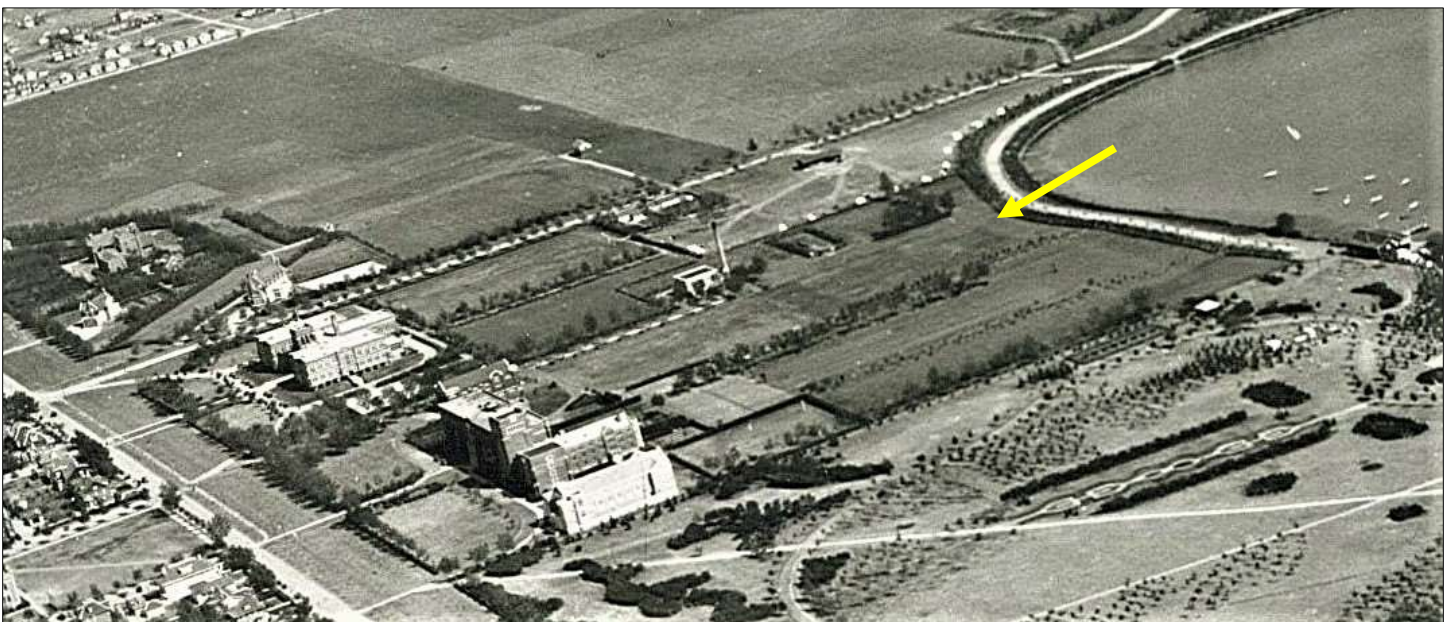


Regina Jail on the north shore of Wascana Lake, c.1913-14. Perhaps closer to 1915, as the roof of the cells section appears to have been removed.

(Source: *Prov. Archives of Sask. photo: Accession: R B-6,160*)

After the new Provincial Jail was completed in 1915, the Territorial Jail complex was demolished and the site was apparently converted into parkland. The first major building to be erected on the old jail site was the Provincial Normal School, which was constructed in 1913 at the SW corner of College Avenue and Broad Street.

In 1926, the Regina Auto Court, a campground of about 15 white tents or cottages was established along Broad Street, south of the Normal School, and east of the former Regina Jail complex (yellow arrow)

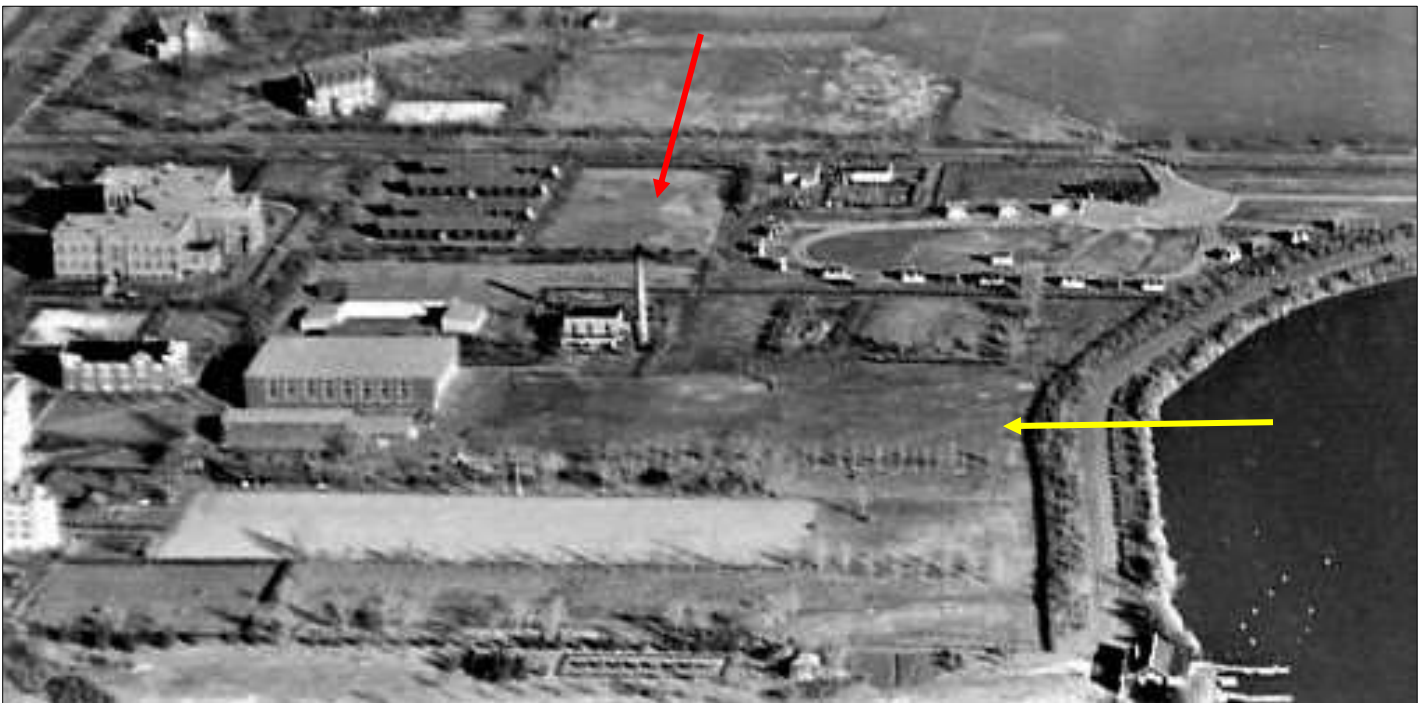


(Source: *Provincial Archive of Saskatchewan: c.1925 - R-B 8631-5*)

Then during World War II some or all of the site was used by the Canadian military, and various temporary structures were erected on the overall property, some of which are evident in aerial the post-War photo below (yellow arrow), directly south of the Normal School.



Aerial view of the Military Barracks – (Source: U of R Archives - 0178-1954)



(Source: Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan [R-A241451](#))

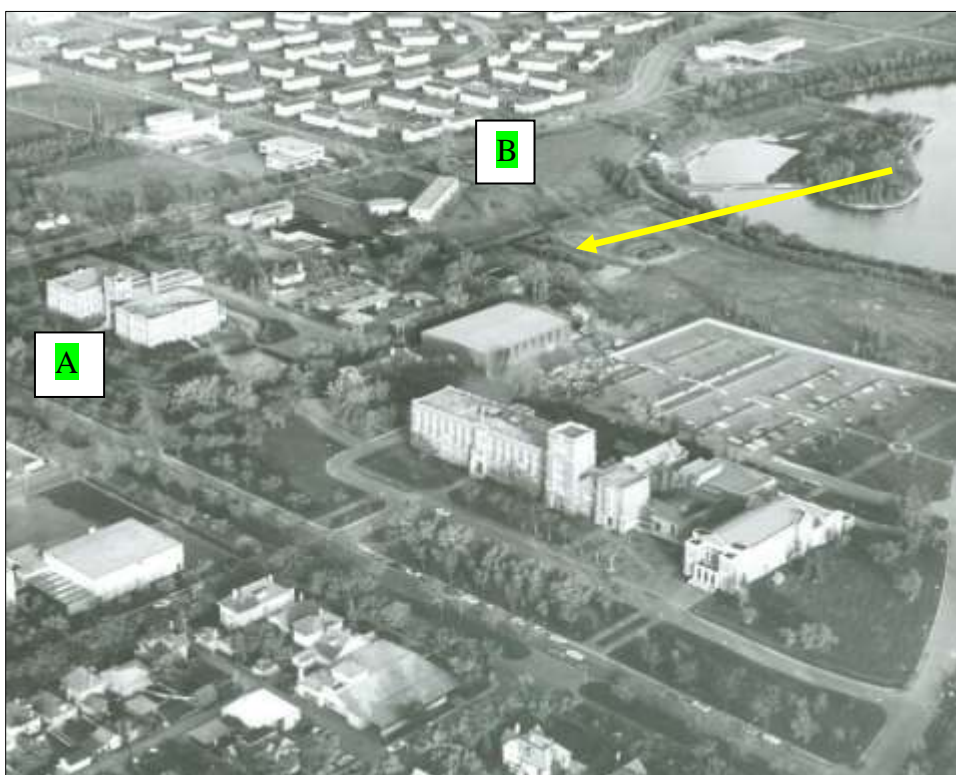
In the later 1940s or early 1950s, a Motor Court comprising of about 15 cabins in an oval pattern was situated south of where the CNIB Building was later constructed (above - red arrow). The yellow arrow marks the approximate location of the Territorial Jail.

Then, in 1955, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind building was erected; followed in 1983 by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's Broadcast Centre immediately south of the Normal School. Renovation and expansion of the Normal School into the Saskatchewan Sounds Stage occurred in 2002; while the CBC Building was rehabilitated to also accommodate the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan in 2019-2020.



Aerial view of the overall former Territorial Jail site, c. 1955 then accommodating the Provincial Normal School , the new CNIB Building, and various former military huts and other structures. The arrow points to the approximate location of the Jail and associated farm complex site.

(Source: University of Regina Archives: 0178-1954)



Aerial view of the overall former Territorial Jail site, c. 1959 then accommodating the Provincial Normal School (A) , the new CNIB Building (B), and various former military huts and other structures. The arrow points to the approximate location of the Jail and associated farm complex site.

(Source: University of Regina Archives: 0179-1959)

Jail Site History:

No research has been undertaken to determine if there was any aboriginal occupation of the site before the land was designed as Government Reserve in 1882.

Likewise, no research has been undertaken on the history of the Jail complex during its 28 years of operation, including information on the administrators, guards, the farm staff, and the prisoners housed here. Nor has any research yet been undertaken to determine if any of the prisoners were executed and subsequently buried at or near the Jail.

Architecture of Major Buildings at the former Territorial Jail Site:

All of the architects associated with the Territorial Jail and major later buildings at this site were well-known at the municipal, provincial and or national level, and include:

- Territorial Jail – Thomas Fuller, Chief Architect of Canada (Dominion Architect)
- Provincial Normal School – Storey and Van Egmond – prominent and prolific Regina / Saskatchewan architectural firm, and designers of a number of provincial government buildings, including court houses and land titles offices
- CNIB Building - F.H. Portnall – prominent Regina / Saskatchewan architect, and designer of several provincial and federal government buildings in Saskatchewan
- CBC Broadcast Centre – Clifford Wiens, prominent Regina / Saskatchewan architect, and designer of several provincial and federal government buildings
- Saskatchewan Soundstage (former Normal School) – Stantec Architecture – prominent Saskatchewan and national architectural firm
- No information has yet been obtained on the buildings erected by the Canadian military during World War II

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and

Hon. Corporate Archivist for the Saskatchewan Association of Architects

For information on the Association: <http://saskarchitects.com/>

Website: www.mhs.mb.ca/korvemaker

Revised: 2 February 2021