
FHBRO Number 94-007

Ottawa, Ontario

William Saunders Building

Central Experimental Farm

The William Saunders Building was built in 1935 to the designs of Ottawa architect John Bethune Roper, to serve as the new Administrative Building for the Central Experimental Farm. There have been no significant alterations. The building currently houses the Centre for Land and Biological Resources Research. Agriculture Canada is custodian. See FHBRO Report 94-007.

Reasons For Designation

The William Saunders Building was designated Recognized for its architectural design, its environmental significance and its historical associations.

The William Saunders Building is a good example of the Collegiate Gothic style of architecture whose ordered planning and design imparts a calm monumentality to the building. This style, with its horizontal emphasis and use of medieval-derived detailing, was selected for numerous federal government buildings in Ottawa as part of the plan for the beautification of the national capital. The building's interior expresses this formal character with decorative finishes such as terrazzo floors with marble borders, and wood doors and trim.

The William Saunders Building's setting has not been significantly altered and it remains the dominant structure in its immediate open area. While it is slightly removed from the more public buildings on the Farm, the building's imposing style and prominent site contribute to its landmark status within the confines of the Farm community.

The William Saunders Building is directly related to the expansion of the Experimental Farm System as it reached the half-century mark. Responding to the increasingly diverse soil and climatic conditions encountered across the country, the Experimental Farm system expanded its research facilities in many recently settled areas, requiring greater research facilities and a centralized administration. The construction of the building, undertaken as part of the Public Works Construction Act of 1934, is also related to the creation of jobs by the federal government to alleviate unemployment during the 1930s.

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Character Defining Elements

The heritage value of the William Saunders Building resides in the quality of its architectural design and in its environmental integrity.

The William Saunders Building is a superior example of the Collegiate Gothic style of architecture built by the Department of Public Works. This style establishes the formal character of the building with its clearly ordered appearance and its fine use of stone detailing to highlight the monochromatic brick facing. The main facade is articulated by a central tower and projecting wings, and displays a Gothic treatment of buttresses, roof-top crenellation, oriel and bay windows. The belt course above the basement level, the moulded window hoods and surrounds, as well as the carved stonework of the entry, oriel window and coat of arms are typical of the Collegiate Gothic, and exhibit a superior level craftsmanship. Masonry conservation expertise should be consulted for any future repairs required to these elements. A number of the early multi-paned casement windows have been replaced, and the exterior metal storm windows, with their one-over-one sash design do not compliment the design intent of the building. At the end of their life, consideration should be given to the replacement of these windows with a more sympathetic design and material, based on historical precedent.

The William Saunders Building is the most prominent structure on the Farm's Main Lawn and its important status is easily distinguished from the nearby utilitarian greenhouses and early workers' residences. The landscaping around the building has matured, but essentially has remained the same. Any changes to the building or setting which detract from its relationship with the open front lawn should be avoided.

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For further guidance, please refer to the *FHBRO Code of Practice*.
