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Susan Granger: ...name Susan Granger, G-r-a-n-g-e-r. I am a UMM grad from 1980, history major. And I am a partner in a historical research firm called Gemini Research.

Christopher Butler: Do you know the reason for Clarence Johnston becoming chief architect of the University of Minnesota?

Susan Granger: Of the University of Minnesota, he was in ma--

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Susan Granger: Clarence Johnston was at the height of his career around 1901, when he became the state of Minnesota architect. He was the first and only state architect and was so for about 30 years. And he won a competition, I believe, competitively was chosen for that role, and so, as a state architect, he became involved in the design of a lot of state institutions, including UMM.

Christopher Butler: What other ones would we know, would most people be familiar with?

Susan Granger: Johnston designed lots of buildings at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities campus, buildings at the other campuses, such as Crookston and Duluth. He designed state institutions, Willmar State Hospital, the TB sanitarium, St. Cloud State, a lot of the normal schools, teachers' colleges. Very broad. He competed for the design of the Minnesota State Capitol and didn't win it. But he designed two buildings that flank the State Capitol, the legislative building and the Minnesota Judicial Building. He, prior to that, had designed a lot of buildings for wealthy St. Paul industrialists, including a lot of mansions on Summit Avenue. He designed Glensheen, in Duluth, which was the home of Charles Congdon, the iron ore magnate. And that's how he met Morrell and Nichols as a matter of fact.

Christopher Butler: Describe to me broadly Clarence Johnston's architectural vision.

Susan Granger: There's a good book been written about him, I don't know if you know

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about that, Minnesota Master Architect.

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Susan Granger: Johnston's been the subject of a fairly recent and very thorough history entitled Minnesota's Master Architect, I think, by Paul Clifford Larson, and it describes the depth of his work. But he designed a lot of public buildings. And I think he believed that, even on a somewhat modest budget and for public purposes, that buildings could be beautiful, durable, high-quality craftsmanship. And so they were not ostentatious buildings but very powerful designs, very good designs and have actually been used and tend to have lived on because of the design quality.

Christopher Butler: What qualities did Johnston want his buildings, architecture to evoke?

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Susan Granger: Johnston designed institutional buildings that didn't feel institutional. Domestic is often the quality that's given to them. Both in his state hospitals and at UMM, he used the Craftsman style, Arts and Crafts style, which was hipped roofs, broad overhanging eaves, lots of windows, the windows opened, porches on the buildings. They're not elitist. They're not Ivy League. They're not pretentious, ostentatious. They're very approachable buildings meant to be lived in, worked in. And he used the same qualities in his state hospital buildings, for example, that weren't designed to be scary institutions but, instead, very approachable by the people that lived and worked in them. If you notice the buildings at UMM, only a couple of them have any kind of architectural pretention. Maybe Behmler Hall would be the one. That was designed right around World War I. So it was sort of an armory style, kind of a almost formal militarism sort of style that he brought to it. Militarism, that wouldn't be right. But anyway the rest of the buildings are domestic, sort of Arts and Crafts. And the Arts and Crafts Movement was one that emphasized the individual. It was very egalitarian. A person's interaction with the outdoors and their environment was very important and the inherent belief in the skills and talents of individuals as opposed to any kind of a hierarchy. You notice the buildings at UMM. There is no real hierarchy in their design. You can't tell which building is the most important. They really work as a unit together, and that's a very intentional design device that he did.

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Christopher Butler: Take a building, on our campus, single building. And kind of talk me through the features that you think are representative of Johnston. So what building would you choose?

Susan Granger: I suppose Camden being the one that's most intact. Also an interesting case is MRC.

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Susan Granger: When Johnston arrived on campus, he really transformed it from a-- the Indian school buildings were standing. The ones that had been built by the Sisters of Mercy were wood frame generally. It was kind of a jumble of buildings, various sizes and shapes. And when the Federal Government came and designed the first Federal Government Indian school buildings, they were quite austere. If you look at the early photos of what we call the Multiethnic Resource Center today, which was designed as the Indian school boys' dormitory, it's austere. It's kind of an imposing, plain-Jane sort of building. But what Johnston did was he redesigned that building, MRC, to go with the rest of the buildings that he designed. And the transformation is really quite something if you look at it. He extended the eaves, put brackets at the eaves, made it sort of more of a house sort of character. He put the beautiful front porch, which still exists, on the porch. And that's one of about eight porches that he designed that were very similar on the campus buildings. He changed the windows. He added a little bit more ornamentation to the building but made it a Craftsman building. And the transformation's really remarkable. It's much more inviting when you look at it.

Christopher Butler: What I've always enjoyed about our conversations about the architecture is that you have a real fondness for what he tried to do. Let's talk about Camden Hall. What is it that you like about Camden Hall in terms of Johnston's craftsmanship?

Susan Granger: The Camden Hall brickwork is beautiful, and UMM just re-tuck pointed it. The brick is really coming out now. It's simple but, when you look at it, very rich in the colors and textures of the brickwork, the dark brown of the trim, the ornamental ironwork. And although Camden's looking a little shabby now, it really needs its renovation, which I think is scheduled, it's a beautiful building. Originally there were three matching porches. The one on the east side has been altered. But they

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were the kind of place that invites you to linger, to mix the inside and outside, which was one of the goals of the Craftsman style. And if you look at the old photos of students, they would lots of times sit on the porches and enjoy the air. The inside of the building is actually quite plain. That's the thing about Johnston buildings. Because this was public institution, it wasn't heavily funded. So they had to make their dollar stretch. That's one of the reasons that they designed Camden and Spooner Hall to be identical buildings, they were making use of the design dollars. Blakely and Imholte Hall are mirror-image buildings of each other. Same thing, they're making the design dollar stretch. And so the interior of Camden is sort of plain. It's a dormitory, you can tell, but very solidly and well-portioned construction, really comfortable to be in.

Christopher Butler: You showed me how the lines sort of work together along those buildings. What's the purpose of that?

Susan Granger: One of the cool things about the UMM campus is that one architect was involved with the design for so long. He was here for 20 full years. He designed his last building right before he died actually. That was the gymnasium building, what we call the PE Annex.

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Susan Granger: One of the neat things about UMM is its design cohesiveness among the buildings. Clarence Johnston was here for 20 full years. He consulted again and again on the campus and designed various buildings. His last building was the gymnasium, built in 1930. That was just a few years before he died, at the end of his career. But because he was here for so many years, the buildings really work together. The materials are very similar. The designs are very similar. And he was able to achieve, working with the landscape designer, Morrell and Nichols, a cohesiveness. If you stand in the middle of the mall and you look at the buildings across the whole circle, all the buildings that face the mall, it's very interesting. Their water-table line, which is the stone line at the top of the foundation, is the same all the way around. The floors of the porches line up. The windowsills of the building line up. And it's the power of architecture actually. If you're standing there, you are perceiving this. This is having an effect on you. But I don't think people really realize what it is they're responding to. But it's the very high quality of the design. And the cohesiveness is one of the things that you're feeling and one of the things that makes UMM so special, I think, and compelling and that people really like about the campus. Yeah, one of the cool things about a campus of this age is that you get this layering of history. You can see the signs of the

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people that were here before you. And the MRC building has, in the brickwork, on the sidewalls especially, has names scratched into them, graffiti essentially. But it's students writing their names and the years they were here. And we've examined them to see if we could find names of Indian school students, and I'm not sure we did. But definitely this was especially the West Central School of Agriculture students.

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Susan Granger: The layering of the campus is interesting. And one of my colleagues, Frank Martin, makes the point, in the Historic Preservation Plan, that, because of the layers of history at UMM, it's a much more interesting place than some other schools. Particularly for being such a young liberal arts campus, if they had just gone out to Morris and built a campus in 1960, it would be somewhat, well, it wouldn't have the sense of rich history that UMM has. But there's actually very complex history, and you can read it off the landscape and read it off the buildings.

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Christopher Butler: Who were Morrell and Nichols?

Susan Granger: Morrell and Nichols, they are Minnesota's really premier pioneer landscape architecture firm. They formed their partnership in the early 20th century, I think right around 1904, when they were just out of school. They were East Coast-trained architects. And they came to Minnesota when they were commissioned to work on the Glensheen Estate, in Duluth, work on the landscape. And they met Clarence Johnston there. And that started many, many decade partnership, or, informal partnership between the two. But Nichols, A.R. Nichols, was one of Minnesota's longest-serving, earliest, most important landscape architect, had a huge impact on the landscape architecture in the state. His partner, Morrell, died in 1926, I think, when he was quite a young man. And his impact is less understood and less felt. I think it was actually Nichols that was on the Morris campus so often, created the master plan for the campus in 1911 and then was asked to come back to the campus again and again as new buildings were sited and as the plan needed to be expanded.

Christopher Butler: What qualities did Morrell and Nichols want to evoke with their landscapes?

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Susan Granger: Morrell and Nichols really transformed the campus, in the same way that Johnston did, from the pioneer sort of beginnings. If you look at the old photographs of the campus, it was an ungodly place. There were no trees. It was harsh. The prairie winds were blowing through. And what particularly A.R. Nichols did was to bring a sense of enclosure, shelter, urbanism, formality to the campus. His design is very interesting because it's formal, which is a wonderful contrast to the harshness, openness of the prairie environment. It has a wonderful sense of welcome, which is the 4th Street entrance, and a real sense of enclosure. He worked with Clarence Johnston to site and design the buildings around the mall. UMM has a center that many, many campuses do not have. If you try to think of other campuses you've been to and try to find the center of them, you can't. There isn't one. But the center of UMM is both the design center of it and the physical center of it and actually a huge gathering place, like a public square. And that was very intentional in the design. They brought an urbanity to the campus. If you look at the early photos, the trees went in immediately. Hundreds of trees were planted on the boulevards. They gave the campus a series of boulevards, sidewalks, curves, straight lines, formal lamp standards and then these beautiful boulevard trees. And they defined open spaces with large conifers, on the corners, again, to create a sense of shelter and welcoming to the campus. Their plan was so successful that it served for 50 years, from 1911 until 1965, when Gay Hall was built. That was the first interruption in the campus plan. In other words, it was very successful.

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Christopher Butler: What are some other features of the Morrell and Nichols design that you particularly like?

Susan Granger: One of the reasons that Morrell and Nichols' design is so successful is its very human scale. The spaces between the buildings, spaces behind the buildings, the buildings themselves and the mall, they're very human in scale. This has a psychological effect on you as you experience it, because you can feel the edges of it. It's like being in a well-designed room. You're comfortable because you understand the edges of it. If you contrast that between standing on the prairie, out in the fields, you know, outside the campus, there's sort of an eerie, uncomfortable feeling and you return to the shelter of the design. The other thing is it's a very egalitarian design and one that UMM continued to try to use after the 1960s. But no building in the plan is more important than any other. The buildings face each other. They're about the same

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size. All disciplines are represented. In West Central School of Agriculture, there was home economics, carpentry, sciences, agricultural studies, engineering, and they all had a place, the dining hall, the administration buildings. And UMM has kept that same thing going. Actually, although the West Central School of Agriculture wasn't a liberal arts campus, it serves liberal arts very well because no one subject is more important than any other. And it encourages and supports the idea of liberal arts education in that you're encouraging people to be broadminded and understand perspectives, various perspectives of each other. In other words, when you graduate from UMM, you're going to know something about science, something about history, something about sociology. And these are the kind of things that make you a better-informed citizen and a more critical thinker as opposed to a technical college or another type of institution. And I think this is another one of the strengths of the design. It's very egalitarian. It served the liberal arts very well, although it wasn't necessarily designed for that purpose.

Christopher Butler: You mentioned that the master plan survived till '65, and then they built Gay Hall. But there's been this return to historical preservation. Why is that?

Susan Granger: I thought of one more thing about the-- one of the other strengths of the Nichols plan is that the campus is public and it had a land grant institutional mission. So it wasn't a private school meant to be set aside. It's not monastic. It's not closed off from the community. The Morrell and Nichols plan had a north-south road that went through it as well as the front entrance drive. In other words, there was access to the fields and access to the community. And if you look at the historic photos or learn about the history of UMM, there were times when there were thousands of people on campus for convocations, for various events. They really served the public. And so one of the reasons-- the campus had to be conducive to that, too, so that you could get in and out of it and drive through it. There have been times in the past when closing the mall down has been suggested, no cars on the mall. I've always thought that was really a bad idea. Because one of the neat things about UMM is you could just drive right into the middle of it. You know, you could be whoever. And you never know what perspective student might be in the backseat of some car with their grandma, you know, driving into UMM. But a lot of the public drives through town and just gets a sense of the campus, and that helps serve the public function and the public mission of the campus. The West Central School of Agriculture-- the Morrell and Nichols plan served the institution until 1965, when the first UMM buildings were sited. And Gay Hall was built on top of that north-south road that I talked about. So it sort of interrupted a key part of the Morrell and Nichols plan when Gay was built. If you talk to the administrators, they will say that, until the early 1990s, it was always assumed that

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many of the early campus buildings would be demolished. Camden was slated for demolition. The Community Services Building was slated for demolition. And as a matter of fact, if you go behind community services and you feel the squeeze between the Humanity Fine Arts Building and community services, it's tight back in there. That's because community services was slated for demolition. The new Food Service Building that was built in the early '70s is set back, too, again, anticipating the demolition of buildings in front of it. So the campus was going to widen out sort of and become a much more modernistic place with a different sense of scale, different-sized buildings, just a more modern approach. In the early 1990s, UMM engaged in a master-plan process. HGA architects and planners were involved, and Frank Martin was one of the planners. He came here, to UMM, and did a participatory-photography project. He passed out cameras to faculty, staff and students and asked them to photograph their favorite places on campus. The results were surprising, although not to Frank, of course, but to most people, including the administrators. The things that people were responding to, at UMM, were some of the historical, cultural values. People loved the barn for example. They loved the old buildings. They loved the porches. They loved the sheltering trees, the human scale. They loved the quiet places. I think this was somewhat of a surprise. And until that point, historic preservation just wasn't even on the radar screen. If you talk to my dad, never thought of it. You know, just new was the thing. They're going to make things new and modern, and they really would've lost something I think. But that 1995 master-plan process, the UMM community really spoke out and said these are the things that attract us to UMM, this is its heart, this is where its alumni loyalty comes from, these are the things that we love about it, the layers of history and the sense of place that UMM has. And so it was in that master-plan process, in the mid-'90s, that UMM started to say maybe we should preserve some of our buildings and start using them again rather than planning for their demolition.

Christopher Butler: It's interesting because that preservation predates what we're doing now with going green and this return to stewardship and responsible use of agriculture. But it seems like the architecture sort of presages that. Do you see a connection there?

Susan Granger: I think you're right. Historic preservation particularly is very green. And, in the mid-1990s and in the late 1990s and even in 2003, when the UMM alumnae nominated the campus for the National Register of Historic Places, no one was thinking green at that time. Sustainability hadn't become a buzzword. But, of course, the reuse of buildings and spaces is absolutely green. They contain hardwoods that aren't even found anymore, beautiful examples of craftsmanship. There's the embodied energy in the buildings. And UMM has now embraced historic preservation in the same way that

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it's embraced other components of being sustainable, including renewable energy.

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Christopher Butler: I know you have a long history here. Your parents were here of course. But as an alum and as a historian, you speak with an exceptional passion about this place. Other than the family connection, what is it that gets you so excited about UMM?

Susan Granger: I think one of the things that gets me so excited about UMM is it's a multifaceted, complex place. But it has a history of excellence. It has a history of excellence in both the physical design, which is the thing that I'm most familiar with, and with the-- its-- the history of s-- I think the physical design supports the hist-- supports scholarship at UMM. Because the physical design is so strong, that makes people love the place. It supports the students that come here to study, the faculty that come here to teach. People love UMM. And it encourages them to flourish. It makes them want to return. There is an intelligence that you can feel in the physicality of the place that continues to this day. The decisions generally have been very smart decisions. UMM has survived despite, I think, what you might think being way out here in Morris, so far from the Twin Cities. It really is a very special place.

Christopher Butler: Lipman Hearne, one of the things that they found, which I always thought was really interesting, in the university system, was that UMM alums had a overwhelmingly large amount of very satisfied alums, 80 percent as opposed to 60 percent at the other campuses. Why do you think that is?

Susan Granger: There's a high level of satisfaction among students, both while they're here and after they've graduated and become alumnae. My bias is that they're responding to the heart of the campus, to the integrity of the people here, to their passion and love for the place and that that is supported. UMM students and faculty and alum have a lot of loyalty to UMM. They really like it. There's a high degree of satisfaction on the campus. I think that part of that is the physicality of the place that supports the scholarship, the excellence in teaching. It's able to achieve great things while being a public institution. It's similar to private colleges, in a way, operating with way less money. There's a special sense maybe about being out here, in Morris, so far from the Twin Cities that allows you to maybe concentrate. You can do research. You can think. You can study. It's very quiet here at UMM. You can actually hear yourself

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think. The human scale of the buildings, the beautiful, rich landscape actually encourage you to be outdoors, to have different perspective. You're not in a big buzz of a city. One of the neat things about UMM, too, is-- another aspect of the layering on the campus is that the modern movement came in the 1960s very strongly. Gay Hall and the Science Building, which have cast concrete architectural features, very modernistic, formed a striking contrast to the old buildings, a contrast that some people don't necessarily like. I've always liked them. But another dramatic difference was the redesign of the mall in 1969. Prior to that, the mall had been a perfectly flat plane. It was a square. It was formal. There was nothing in the middle. In the late 1960s, University of Minnesota landscape architect named Roger Martin, very highly regarded in his field, redesigned the mall, transformed it into a absolutely wonderful example of 1960s design. If you look at an aerial view of the mall especially, it's a series of cells. It brings the organic, modernistic '60s. It's just a classic '60s design with this sort of elliptical shape in the middle, cells around the outside. The sidewalks invite you to come in from all directions. It includes the circle, which is, again, a very egalitarian thing. I don't know how well the mall was used before the Roger Martin redesign, but it was definitely used afterwards. It draws people to the center. And there's a beautifully landscaped outdoor stage in the corner of the mall, which is brilliant. When you look at the back of it, you don't even know the stage is there. And since that time, of course, UMM has been holding graduations on that mall. One of the other things that architecturally UMM has, the Ralph Rapson-- his Humanities Fine Arts Building, from the early 1970s, won numerous awards, is a fantastic example of Rapson, a very important modern architect. Probably Minnesota's most important modernist was Ralph Rapson, and it's an excellent example of his work. It's interesting that we could have such fine examples of modern architecture also. But when Edson Hall was redesigned as the student center, I think in the mid-1970s, the architects intentionally chose the hipped-roof form for Oyate Hall, for the redesign of the student center so that the massing of the building reflects the massing of the buildings around it. And this is a reflection of the historic campus, people taking inspiration from it. When the new Science Building was designed, they took the inspiration even further using the same brown brick. The Science Building's a absolute state-of-the-art science classroom and laboratory facility. But it has the hipped roof, lots of windows, sort of a regularity and formality to the design that works very well with the existing buildings on the mall. And the back of it actually is-- in parts of it, they were more modernistic. But especially on the mall, they tried to reflect the other buildings on the campus and blend with them rather than being quite so discordant, which was perhaps what Gay Hall was.

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