

South East Edmonton Seniors Association

HISTORY OF SEESA

In the late seventies Edmonton Parks and Recreation Department identified the need for a multi-use citizens' centre in the Bonnie Doon area. As a result, implementation of a needs survey was initiated by a group of interested seniors residing in the Holyrood area. In 1979 it was realized that the vacant St. Helen's school at 9350-82 St., in an available transit location, would be suitable. The Catholic School Board was approached and agreed to rent the building to the City of Edmonton for such use. St Helen School was built in 1956 and the gymnasium was added in 1960.

On March 18, 1980 a general meeting was called. About eighty seniors attended along with representatives from Parks and Recreation, Edmonton Preventative Social Services and New Horizons. As a result of the meeting volunteers came forward to form a Board of Directors to draw up a set of by-laws for this association. The main objective was to create a friendly place for seniors to meet, socialize and share ideas. John Sandercook became president and Tillie Poulsen was secretary.

On May 12, 1980 an application for incorporation was made. A Certificate of Incorporation as a registered society under the Societies Act of Alberta was received on June 17, 1980.

Faced with an empty building and bare walls, applications for financial assistance were made to various organizations both private and government. Grants were received and donations came in. Purchasing, fundraising and other committees were formed to handle the various operating tasks. The first donation received was a tea kettle from Zellers, immediately put into use to make coffee and tea for the volunteers. Later, the Co-Op contributed a freezer, Eaton's a refrigerator and a stove, and Sears provided a sewing machine.

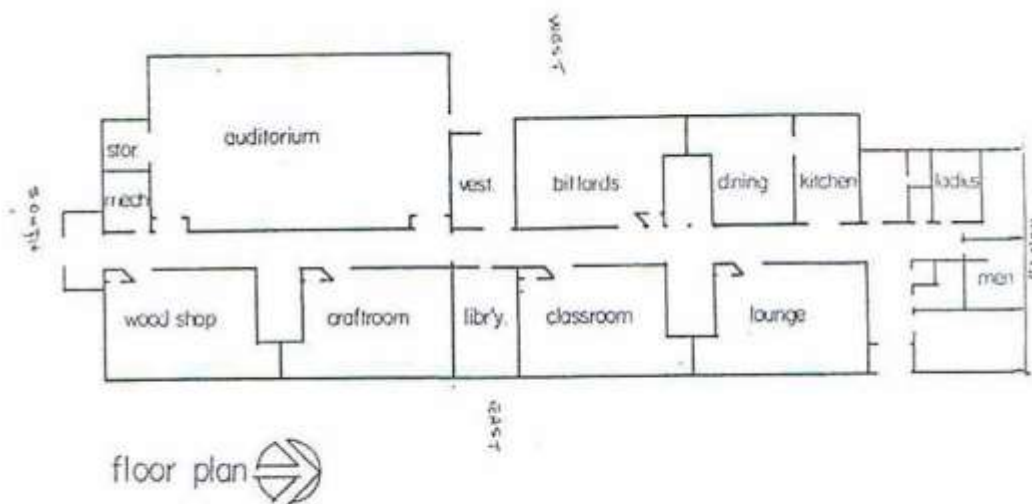
The first summer the centre opened for one day a week. When membership increased the centre was opened from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm daily. Members took turns opening and closing the building. By December of 1980 the membership rose to 265. In January of 1981, a manpower grant enabled the centre to hire a coordinator, a secretary and a caretaker. With other grants

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and donations the centre bought furnishings, games and craft equipment.

Renovations to the school were carried out. Classrooms were changed into a kitchen, a dining room, a card room, a craft room, a pool room and a woodworking shop with a lapidary section. The auditorium was used for bi-monthly dances, a choral group, orchestral practices, fitness classes, carpet bowling and bingos. At the end of one and a half years of operation there were 662 members, and by 1987 the membership reached 903 members. In 1983 a "restaurant" license was needed as the Association was serving food to the public.

In 1987 negotiations for the City to buy the building started. Ian Chessor who was president and Merrill Morstad as chairman of the building committee met with Bob Card of Parks and Recreation, development department to buy the building. In 1988 all money from casinos and from Northgate Bingo was set aside in the Building Fund. With the approval of the Board, Merrill Morstad called the architectural firm of W. Brian Edwards to evaluate the building. They described St. Helen's School "as a single story building, with varying roof height, built in 1956, the gymnasium added in 1960, and reroofed in 1989". It was listed as being an extremely sound building of 1300 square feet. A document dated March 25, 1991 included the estimated cost of all renovation to be \$535,000.00. The diagram below shows the basic floor plan as the building was in 1991.



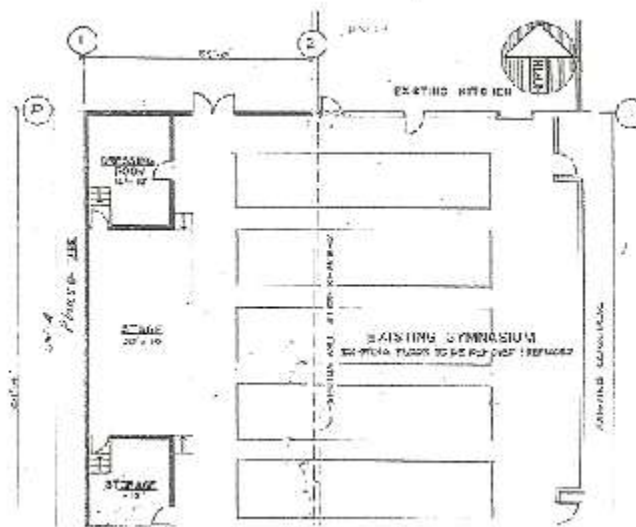
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At an Annual General meeting held in February of 1992 the membership approved the payment of \$127,750.00 as the contribution of SEESA, to go to the City for the purchase of St. Helen's. That \$127,750.00 was the prepaid rent for twenty [20] years. This amount was to be paid in three installments, the first for \$50,000.00 by February 15, 1992, the second for \$50,000.00 by December 31, 1992, and for \$27,750.00 by June 30, 1993. The money was there!!

Heron Construction was hired to do the work. What had been the library along with a few feet of the classroom to the north of the library became the ladies and men's washrooms. What had been the "boy's" washroom became the Executive Director's office, and the "girl's" washroom became the Outreach workers office. Phase 1 was completed on time and under budget at \$51,500.00.

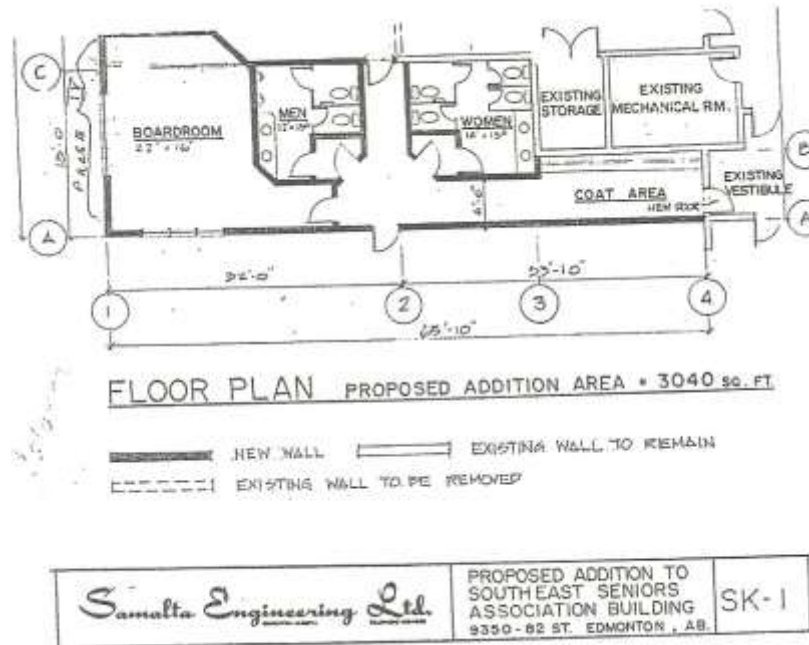
In the summer of 1993 phase II, the kitchen was moved to a central location listed as vest or vestibule, and an 18 foot extension to the west was completed for \$110,000.00.

In 1994 the addition to the auditorium was completed for \$152,044.86



In 1997 the addition to the south end of the building was completed. This included a meeting room a men's and a ladies washroom, a hallway to the south doors and an addition to the woodworking shop for \$192,000.00. What was left to finish was the parking lot. The quote to pave the lot and install plugins was \$11,986.00. This was done.

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In 2000 some new members came on the board with Gordon Block as president. They hired Mary Anne Jaedicke as the new Executive Director in September, and started to build up the membership.

In 2005 the talk around the coffee table was that the kitchen was too small and too hard to work in. The kitchen was not designed for easy access to the different areas when more than five people worked in the kitchen. There was no place to put the dirty dishes when the workers brought them in from the dining hall because the dishwashing area was too small. The space between the stove and the work counter was too narrow for two workers to pass. This was a hazard if a worker was bumped and something hot was spilled. The freezer had to be put in a different part of the building, which meant more walking for the kitchen workers. The kitchen workers had to be careful where they plugged the coffee makers in or the breakers would trip.

The number of people coming in to the lunch room had increased, and we could only seat 48 people in the lunch room. The monthly birthday parties often had to be moved to the auditorium, which necessitated cancelling a program for that afternoon. On occasion there were more people for lunch than there was space. This made it difficult for the workers as well as people with walkers or wheelchairs to get around.

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A committee of Mary Anne Jaedicke, Bill Lawrence, Herb Johnson and Gordon Block as Chair proposed an expansion. The committee met with Vivian Devoe from the city of Edmonton and with the additional information she gave them they went to work.

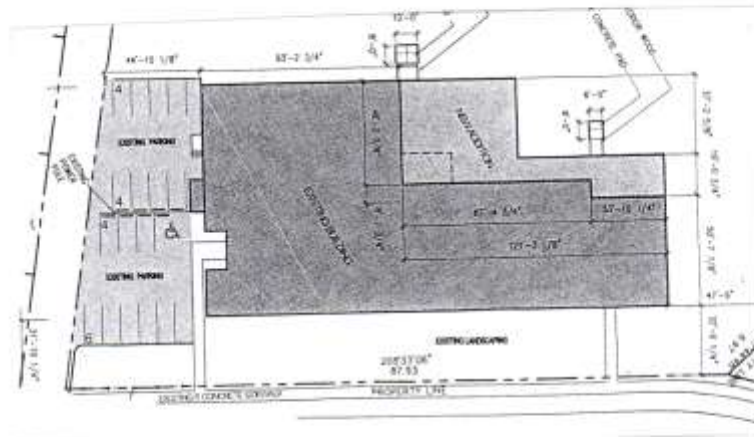
They went to a Holyrood Community League Annual Meeting on April 26, 2005 and got there permission to use the land required to expand the building and build a 50 car parking lot on the west side of the building as the drawing below shows. We asked a friend of SEESA, Terry Hartwick to draw up a plan we could use. He drew the plan below.



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A building committee consisting of John Bannister, Steve Bennett, Phyllis Johnston, Walter Klepachek, Allen Thomas, Mary Ann Jaedicke, Gordon Block (chair), Harvey Norstrom and Kimberly Buehler (Executive Director) was formed. Letters were sent out to four different contractors. Clark Builders was the successful bidder. We decided to do the construction of the building in four phases.

The first phase was to renovate the kitchen and add a bigger dining room.



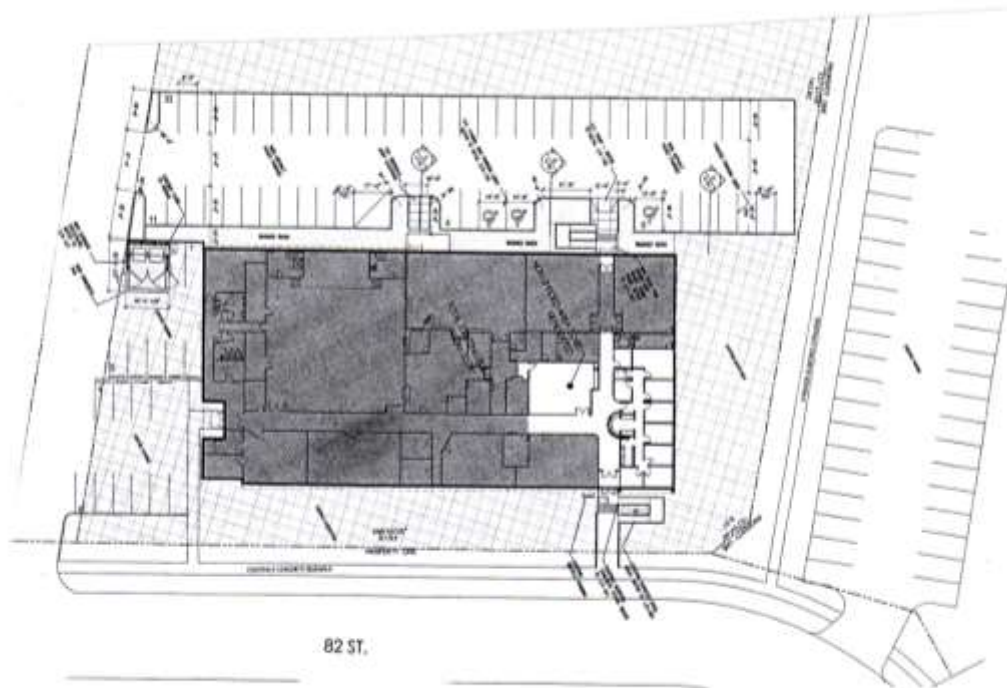
The second phase was to add the Program room and the Craft room.

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The third phase was to renovate the office area and the meeting room which became the Edmonton Room.



The fourth phase was to build the west parking lot.



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We upgraded our sound system in the auditorium in 2011.

The cost for the most recent renovations totalled about \$3.6 million.

The funding was as follows:

- ❑ Fundraising Activities - \$180,000
- ❑ Member donations - \$183,000
- ❑ Non-member donations - \$14,000
- ❑ Corporations - \$76,000
- ❑ City of Edmonton - \$1,077,000
- ❑ Province - \$ 591,000
- ❑ Federal - \$897,000
- ❑ Gaming revenue - \$310,000
- ❑ Interest on excellent investments - \$47,000

Much credit is owed to the vision of the membership, the Board, and the staff of those years, that the money was raised and the project brought to completion. As of 2014, SEESA has the space to accommodate over 1200 members.