

The Buildings of Dalhousie University

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Dalhousie College, Original (Grand Parade)

Address: Duke and Barrington Sts.

Start Date: 1820 Completion Date: 1824

Architect: Scott Renovation Date(s): demolished 1886

Contractor:

Building History



Painted representation of Dalhousie College, 1932



1st Dalhousie Building, On Grand Parade, January 25, 1962

Dalhousie's first campus was located downtown on the Grand Parade, where City Hall now stands. The Earl of Dalhousie, then Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia, formed an interim Board of Trustees for the new college in 1817. An architect of the name of Scott was hired to design the building, a one-storey stone structure. The lower foundation on Duke Street was to be rented out as shops, with the upper storeys - a second storey was soon added - to serve the school.

The cornerstone of "Halifax College" was laid on May 22, 1820. Financial constraints delayed the completion of construction until 1824. The final cost of the building was \$29,500, quite a substantial sum for a single building at the time.

For many years the building sat empty because strong religious and political tensions in Nova Scotia created resistance between the new Dalhousie College and the two other colleges in Nova Scotia. In 1830 the building was occupied by a grammar school, a painting school and a pastry chef's shop. In 1834 a cholera epidemic struck Halifax, killing four hundred people out of a population of 14,000. During this time Dalhousie College served as a hospital. In the later 1830s, the Mechanic's Institute occupied a portion of the building, hosting public lectures and meetings.

Dalhousie College re-opened on November 1, 1838, with twelve students and three professors. There was no library and little equipment and by 1845 the small size, limited resources, and lack of support caused the college to languish and close.

Nearly twenty years later, in 1863, Dalhousie College and University was revived with the Dalhousie Act, thanks to the determination of the region's Presbyterians (although the college remained officially unaffiliated with any denomination). The Faculty of Medicine was formed in 1868. Within a decade, the medical deans' desire for more authority and better facilities led to the Faculty's separation into the Halifax Medical College, but it rejoined Dalhousie in 1889. Dalhousie's Faculty of Law was established in 1883.

By 1885, it was clear that Dalhousie College needed a larger building. The City of Halifax wanted possession of the entire Grand

Parade, and negotiations and property scouting led to an agreement. Dalhousie relinquished its building to the City in exchange for property at the foot of Carleton Street and \$25,000. The original Dalhousie building was soon demolished to make way for a new City Hall, in whose foundation was included one original ironstone block from the Dalhousie College building. Dalhousie erected a spacious new building, now called the Forrest Building, on its new campus.

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References

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