

## ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF DALHOUSIE

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*Halifax, Nova Scotia*

From afar, the focal point in the Halifax skyline is the Sir Charles Tupper Medical Building. It is majestic, solid, symmetrical. Its imposing height of 227 feet of precast stone panels represents our medical progress. Its walls enclose the key to our medical future.

Nestled within the shadow of the Tupper Medical Building are most of the historical sites that mark the beginning and advance of medical teaching in the Atlantic Provinces.

It was Sir Charles Tupper who, in 1864, read a memorandum to the Dalhousie Board of Governors proposing a Medical School in Halifax. However, at the time it was not expedient to establish a medical school. There were two major problems that had to be overcome. One was the lack of hospital facilities for clinical teaching, and the other was the illegality of obtaining bodies for the Anatomy Department. In 1868 the passage of the Anatomy Act removed the major objection. The time was ripe and so on January 14, 1868, the proposal was again brought before the Board of Governors by Dr. A. P. Reid. This time the proposal was accepted and the Medical Faculty of Dalhousie came into existence. Canada's fifth medical school, with a part-time unpaid staff, was entrusted with the responsibility of Medical Education for the Atlantic Provinces.

So in 1868, Medicine joined the other faculties at Dalhousie College which was located on the Grand Parade where City Hall now stands. This was to be the home of medicine in the Maritimes for only five short years. In 1873 the Dalhousie Medical School had to be abandoned due to financial difficulties. It was a rather inauspicious beginning but better things were in store. Two years later a resourceful group of Halifax physicians, determined to teach their profession, banded together and founded the Hali-

fax Medical College. The college was quite separate and distinct from Dalhousie and was incorporated in 1875. It was housed in a new \$8,000, three storey wooden building located on the north-east corner of College and Carleton Streets, just opposite the new Sir Charles Tupper Medical Building. This building has lost much of its medical flavor due to its long years of domestic life. According to Dr. Atlee, it has also lost its top storey in which his class "learned to dissect bodies and chew tobacco." However, there is some doubt that the original building still stands. Another noted authority, the late R. J. Boon, a former Assistant Dean of Medicine stated that the Halifax Medical College was demolished in 1929 to make way for the present day residence.

By 1885 the Halifax Medical College had established itself and had successfully graduated several classes. But the need of pre-clinical instruction that Dalhousie could offer was becoming apparent. So in that year affiliation with Dalhousie was effected. This affiliated status lasted until 1911, when once again the Medical School became an integral part of Dalhousie University. To signify the union, the Medical Faculty left its home on the corner of College and Carleton Streets. It journeyed fifty yards up College Street, turned sharply to the left and found itself in the Forrest Building. Here it vied for space with Engineering, Law, and, in fact, most of what then constituted Dalhousie.

The Forrest Building lies to the west of the new Sir Charles Tupper Medical Building. It was opened in 1886 and built to replace the initial Dalhousie building situated on the Grand Parade. From 1911 until 1923 the entire preclinical requirements of the Medical School were taught under its roof. Then from 1923 - 1967 the building housed the Departments of Anatomy, Microanatomy, and research laboratories for Anatomy and Surgery.

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\*Fourth year medicine, Dalhousie University.

## THE SIR CHARLES TUPPER MEDICAL BUILDING



OFFICIALLY OPENED

JULY 14, 1967

BY HER MAJESTY

QUEEN ELIZABETH

THE

QUEEN MOTHER

### DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

WHY a new, multi-million dollar medical school?

- \* There has been a rapid rise in the number of applicants for entry into medicine, dentistry, and other health professions.
- \* There is a serious shortage of doctors in the Atlantic Provinces.
- \* Present facilities are over-crowded.
- \* More research space is needed.

The Tupper building has been designed to meet the pressing need for more doctors and to provide vitally needed facilities for research. Alumni, business and industry have made substantial contributions to the Dalhousie Expansion Fund, and governments have provided large grants from the Centennial and Health Resources Fund, but almost \$2 million is still required to pay for the building. The support of many medical alumni is urgently required. Help the university to uphold her tradition of expanding services to meet the needs of her constituency.

From 1923 to 1924 saw a great advance in the building facilities of the Medical School. The Rockefeller Foundation, a generous benefactor of Dalhousie, constructed the Medical Science Building in 1923. The completion of this building, which lies to the west of the new Sir Charles Tupper Medical Building, greatly eased the strained resources of the Forrest Building by taking over the Departments of Biochemistry, Pharmacology, and Physiology.

In 1924 the Public Health Centre (now the Clinical Research Centre) was built. This building is now connected to the southern end of the Tupper Medical Building. The funds for the construction of the Public Health Centre were acquired in a rather interesting way. Shortly after the tragic Halifax explosion, the people of Massachusetts raised a large sum of money for the care of the injured and pensions for the disabled. The money was very capably invested and when all the obligations had been fulfilled there was still a residue of \$300,000. The local committee offered to return the money but the magnanimous Governor of Massachusetts would hear none of that. So the \$300,000 became the Public Health Centre. A very practical reminder of the good will of the people of Massachusetts.

The Medical School waited 15 years for its next building. Up to that time the library for the growing medical school was contained in a combustible room in the Forrest Building. This was far from satisfactory; by far the most satisfactory solution was the building of the Medical - Dental Library in 1939. This \$100,000 building was mainly financed by the generous donations of prominent Nova Scotians. The Library was sacrificed in 1965 to make room for the Sir Charles Tupper Medical Building. The building was already too small to serve the library needs and its continued existence would have given the campus a rather cramped appearance.

By 1958 the Faculties of Dentistry and Law had left the Forrest Building. This, and the new addition to the Pathology Institute in 1960, alleviated some of the space problems besetting the Medical School. But the seventy-three year old Forrest Building was fast becoming faded and obsolete, and the overcrowding in other medical buildings was reaching unmanageable proportions. Added to this was the rising tide of applica-

tions from prospective students and the shortage of doctors in the Atlantic Provinces. In a survey taken in 1960 the average Canadian population to physician ratio was 879 to 1. Therefore in 1950 definite plans were started to expand enrollment and increase facilities.

The Dalhousie Medical buildings as they were then had been completed in 1924 and had been designed for fifty medical students and ten dental students. With the post-war influx into medical school some additional stop gap measures were taken and the medical enrollment was gradually increased to seventy-two. A critical point had been reached; more room was needed; a new building was essential.

Fortunately Canada's Centennial celebrations were approaching and in 1961 the Federal Government created the Centennial Commission to help plan and implement centennial projects. As a happy coincidence Sir Charles Tupper, the man who was the chief architect of confederation in Nova Scotia, was also a physician. This provided an excellent opportunity to request a centennial grant for the construction of the Sir Charles Tupper Medical Building. "It would be a fitting memorial commemorating Confederation, because of Dr. Tupper's close ties with Confederation, the medical profession, the province and the University." This was the suggestion of Dr. C. B. Stewart, the Dean of Medicine.

A formal request was sent to Ottawa in 1962. In 1964 the Federal Government announced their approval of a grant of \$2,500,000 to be matched by the province. The major obstacle had been overcome. On July 29, 1965, a sod turning ceremony was held, on the same date the next year a flag raising ceremony was held on reaching the fifteenth floor. By July 14, 1967, the first three floors and the fifteenth were furnished and the building was officially opened by her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. By September 1967 the building, although not completely finished, was ready for occupancy and it received its first enlarged medical class. In ninety-nine years Dalhousie Medical School has gone from one building with an enrollment of fourteen to a modernized complex of buildings and an enrollment of ninety-six.

The buildings and facilities are essential to the teaching of twentieth century medicine. But in the grandure of granite, wall to wall



# **The Medical Society of Nova Scotia**

## **The Nova Scotia Division**

### **of the**

## **Canadian Medical Association**

Founded in 1954 and incorporated in 1861, the Medical Society has thirteen Branch Societies throughout the Province. There are thirteen sections within the Society representing groups with particular interests in various areas of Medicine.

Thirty-five committees and fifteen representatives to other organizations are responsible for projecting the policies of the Society. The governing body is a Council of approximately one hundred and twenty members which reports to the Annual Meeting. The Executive Committee is responsible for the business of the Society between Annual Meetings.

Group Disability Insurance, Overhead Office Expense Insurance, and Life Insurance are available to members in good standing. The Society publishes The Nova Scotia Medical Bulletin monthly. Membership in the Canadian Medical Association provides the Canadian Medical Association Journal weekly and eligibility for participation in the Canadian Medical Retirement Savings Plan and the Canadian Medical Equity Fund.

Conjoint membership in The Medical Society of Nova Scotia and the Canadian Medical Association is available to any physician licensed to practice in Nova Scotia.

Further information may be obtained from:

C. J. W. BECKWITH, M.D., D.P.H.  
Executive Secretary

SIR CHARLES TUPPER MEDICAL BUILDING  
UNIVERSITY AVENUE  
HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA

carpeting, and closed circuit television, we must never lose sight of the importance of individual effort. We must also be gratefully aware of the determination and foresight of those who have successfully guided the Dalhousie Medical School through the past century to the enviable position it occupies today.

I am indebted to the following, whose articles supplied the essential data: Dr. C. B. Stewart, Dean of Medicine; Dr. H. B. Atlee, Dr. H. L. Scammell, Dr. G. B. Wiswell, the late Dr. K. A. MacKenzie and the late R. J. Boon.

I am also indebted to the Dean's Secretary, Miss Barbara Blauvelt, who supplied most of the references.

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