

## *The Buildings of Dalhousie University*

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# Marion McCain Arts and Social Sciences Building

Address: 6135 University Avenue

Start Date: 1998

Completion  
Date: 2001

Architect: Lydon Lynch; A. J. Diamond,  
Donald Schmitt & Company

Renovation  
Date(s):

Contractor:

## Building History

The Marion McCain Arts and Science Building (also called the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, or "FASS," Building) was the first major addition to teaching facilities on the Dalhousie campus in twenty years. Opening in 2001, it replaced the twenty-seven wood frame houses that for decades had housed Arts and Sciences departmental offices.

As early as 1982, a space consultant's report recommended that Dalhousie consolidate its Arts departments into one building. The houses along LeMarchant, Seymour and Henry Streets were deteriorating; selling the properties would bring in money and put an end to the high costs of maintaining the old buildings. Another recommendation for an arts building was made in 1996, in a report of the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Committee that observed the old houses were unsafe, inefficient and inadequate.

The \$12 million McCain Building was financed in part with a donation from the McCain family of New Brunswick. Marion McCain, who died in 1994, was a patron of the arts and a generous Dalhousie donor for many years. The Capital Ideas fundraising campaign, begun in 1993, also contributed funds, including \$1 million from the student body. The Nova Scotia government gave another \$6 million.

Two architectural firms, Lydon Lynch of Halifax and Toronto's A. J. Diamond, Donald Schmitt & Company, designed the 90,000 square foot building, which took the place of the Arts Centre parking lot and some of the university houses. The McCain Building fulfilled one of the aims of the 1991 campus plan, to develop buildings along the "spine" of campus, University Avenue. It exemplifies another key vision of the plan, that buildings be of a hybrid design, with tall institutional frontings on University, and side wings of smaller proportions to create a transition of scale with the surrounding houses. The design is reflective of Canadian architecture at the time, with disparate components put together and a resistance against order and uniformity.

Construction began on the McCain Building in 1998. The opening, scheduled for September 2000, was delayed by weather, difficulty obtaining supplies, a series of break-ins, and wiring blunders. The official

opening took place on September 5, 2001 and was attended by Marion McCain's daughter. The McCain Building won the 2001 Lieutenant-Governor's Award of Excellence.

The McCain Building boasts large auditoriums, language labs, classrooms and offices for Arts departments: Philosophy, Sociology and Social Anthropology, French, History, Classics, English, Russian, Spanish, German, and Comparative Religion. The office of the Dean of Arts and Sciences is also there, along with Security Services.

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