

# The Buildings of Dalhousie University

## Chemistry Building

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Address: 6274 Coburg Rd.

Start Date: August 15, 1912      Completion Date: March 1915

Architect: Andrew R. Cobb; Frank Darling      Renovation Date(s): 1917; 1920; 1965; 1991

Contractor: Falconer & McDonald



Chemistry Building Cornerstone Laying, August 15, 1912



Chemistry Building - pre-Sir James Dunn Building - Exterior, 1937



Chemistry Building Classroom, 1937

### Building History

Dalhousie's Chemistry Building was the first building erected on the Studley campus after the property was purchased in 1911. It was envisioned by architect Frank Darling of Toronto, who surveyed the lot in 1911 and created a general campus plan. Darling chose a local architect of high repute, Andrew Randall Cobb, to design the buildings. Together they decided on an 18th century Georgian style of architecture because it was in keeping with other attractive buildings in Halifax such as Province House and Government House. The Georgian style was adaptable and would lend an inviting, 'domestic' appearance to the campus. Dalhousie's President praised the new building as "by far the largest and finest building for pure science east of McGill" (President's Report, 1911-1912).

The "Science Building", as it was originally called, began the central quadrangle that Darling, Cobb and Dalhousie envisioned as the academic core of the campus, secluded from the public. For the perimeter of the campus they planned elements that would serve the non-academic needs of Dalhousie, such as residences, athletics facilities and the "College Green."

Cobb designed the Chemistry Building in consultation with Dalhousie's two science professors, Eben Mackay and Howard Bronson, and President A. Stanley Mackenzie. The final plans were completed in January 1913. The building was constructed of hard ironstone from nearby Purcell's Cove, complemented with strong Portland cement. It was designed as two separate buildings in one, so that the hazardous fumes of the Chemistry department would be isolated from the Physics department. There was space allotted also to the Engineering and Geology departments, there until 1945. With expansion, it was intended that Physics would eventually move elsewhere and Chemistry would occupy the entire building, a situation which came to pass in 1960 and remains in place today.

The Chemistry Building's cornerstone was laid on August 15, 1912, by the Governor General the Duke of Connaught, in a ceremony attended by the High Commissioner for Australia, the premiers of Quebec and Nova Scotia and the Governor of Newfoundland. Construction was funded by a Carnegie Corporation grant of

\$50,000, with Dalhousie required to raise an additional \$40,000. The building was finished by summer 1915, when the move took place from the Forrest Building.

On December 6, 1917, the Chemistry Building was severely damaged in the Halifax Explosion. Repairs to doors, windows and the roof were extensive and cost almost \$10,000, a sum readily paid by the Carnegie Corporation.

In 1965, the building was joined to the adjacent Macdonald Memorial Library (now the Macdonald Building). The extension created 40,000 square feet of new floor space and added additional departmental offices, the university bookstore and a lecture hall. A \$9.8 million extension and renovation in 1991 updated the building and facilities and added almost 23,000 square feet on the north side of the building, including new undergraduate laboratories.

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Macdonald Building and Chemistry Building, prior to the construction of the Chemistry Extension Building, October 6, 1964



Chemistry Building, 1965

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