

# The Buildings of Dalhousie University

## Clinical Research Centre

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Address: 5849 University Av.

Start Date: May 1922    Completion Date: Spring 1924

Architect: Andrew R. Cobb    Renovation Date(s): 1953; 1955; 1956; 1959; 1966; 2005

Contractor: Dalhousie Construction Committee



Clinical Research Centre Construction, February 1923



Clinical Research Centre, April 1925



### Building History

Dalhousie's Clinical Research Centre, built in 1922-1924, was originally called the Public Health Clinic. It was built to provide clinical instruction to Medical students in minor illness, as well as raise their awareness of public health issues. Students benefited from the numerous public health agencies that Dalhousie accommodated in the building: the Halifax Visiting Dispensary (then the only out-patient clinic in the city); the Victorian Order of Nurses; the Massachusetts-Halifax Health Commission; venereal disease treatment clinic; dentist of the Board of Schools Commission; I.O.D.E.; Halifax County Anti-Tuberculosis Association; and the Junior League, among others.

The building's construction and equipment were funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and Carnegie Corporation, two American philanthropic organizations which have given hundreds of millions of dollars to charitable causes since they were founded in 1913 and 1911 respectively. Both were supporters of the development of North American medical schools and made possible several Dalhousie building projects in the 1920s.

The Public Health Clinic was designed by Halifax architect Andrew R. Cobb, the university's primary architect in the 1910s and 1920s. It is faced with tapestry brick matching that used in the Burbidge building. The cornerstone was laid on October 9, 1922, by Nova Scotia Premier George H. Murray, in a ceremony attended by Lieutenant-Governor McCallum Grant as well as Board of Governors representatives and President A. Stanley Mackenzie.

In this period, general contracting for Dalhousie projects was handled by the Dalhousie Construction Department, headed by University Engineer H.R. Theakston. Construction of the Clinic began in May 1922 and was completed in the spring of 1924. The building was occupied as of August, 1924 and the first patients were treated on November 3, 1924.

Clinic use grew enormously in its first fifteen years, as it played a key role in the community by providing services to lower income residents of the city. Medical, housekeeping and kitchen staff

Clinical Research Centre, Outpatient  
and Public Health Clinic Interior, n.d.

worked and lived in the building, and visiting physicians worked long hours without remuneration. Dalhousie ran into trouble when the Massachusetts-Halifax Health Commission wrapped up its involvement in the Clinic and staff were reduced seventy-five percent. It was struck with the burden of running the Clinic on its own with no aid from the City of Halifax or the province. This situation seemed unfair when compared to what other city governments did for their public health services. After several years of promoting the importance of the Public Health Clinic and wrangling for support, the Nova Scotia government agreed to provide \$5,000 a year and the Rockefeller Foundation up to \$8,800 a year, for the next five years. The Clinic would not have to be closed.

In 1948, the Victoria General Hospital opened an out-patient department; with its demand lessened, the Public Health Clinic expanded its pediatric services, serving as the out-patient department of the Children's Hospital and Grace Maternity Hospital. In the 1950s it housed a Mental Health Clinic for Children as well as the Department of Psychiatry and the Dental Clinic, among others.

As campus growth allowed departments' relocation and area hospitals took over clinical services, the Public Health Clinic was converted to meet the Faculty of Medicine's growing research function. Dining room, kitchen, storage rooms and employee quarters gradually gave way to administrative offices, laboratories and seminar rooms. In 1958 the building housed offices of the Halifax Public Health Nurses, the School of Nursing, Dean of Medicine, Director of Post Graduate Medical Education, the departments of Preventive Medicine and Psychiatry, Student Health Services, and the pharmacy of the Halifax Visiting Dispensary.

The building underwent major remodeling in 1967 when the Sir Charles Tupper Medical Building was built, in order to provide research labs for clinical departments in the Medical School. Thereafter, it housed the Family Medicine Centre, infertility clinic, Preventive Medicine, heart and lung unit and estrogen and cardiovascular labs.

Today, clinical training of Dalhousie Medical students takes place in numerous teaching hospitals and family practice units throughout the Halifax Regional Municipality and the Atlantic provinces. As of 2005 the Clinical Research Centre is the location of administrative and academic departments of the Medical School, including the Division of Medical Education, Finance and Administration, Postgraduate Medical Education, and the departments of Bioethics and Community Health and Epidemiology.

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