

The Buildings of Dalhousie University

G. H. Murray (G) Building

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Address: 1360 Barrington St.

Start Date: 1911 (original); Completion Date: 1912 (original); 1932 (rebuilt) (original); 1933 (rebuilt)

Architect: W.M. Brown (original); C.A. Fowler (rebuilt) Renovation Date(s): 1921/22; 1949; 1966-67; 1973/74; 1981/82; 1984-87

Contractor: F.A. Ronnan & Co. (original); Brookfield Construction Co. (rebuilt)



Murray Laboratory of Mining Engineering - Exterior, n.d.



Murray Laboratory of Mining Engineering - Exterior, n.d.



Mineral Ore Dressing Lab, n.d.

Building History

The original G Building was two stories high and intended to hold both the Nova Scotia Technical College's (coal) Mining Engineering department and an ore dressing facility. Its construction and equipping was scheduled to begin in the summer of 1910, but it was postponed until 1911. The cornerstone was laid on May 23, 1911 by the building's namesake, the Hon. George H. Murray, Premier of Nova Scotia.

The Murray Building was not entirely completed until the summer of 1912, but it was in use during the winter of 1911-12. It was erected behind the College's Main (H) Building, constructed of concrete and plain brick - with a steel frame and roof trusses - and with a simple, classic design, in keeping with the Main Building. Its dimensions were 87 feet east- west and 89 feet and six inches north-south. Most of the work in connection with the design and equipment was done by the staff and students of the College's Mining Department. The steel roof trusses were designed by students of the Civil Engineering Department. Mr. W.M. Brown designed the building's architectural details and acted as consulting architect during the construction, which was contracted to F.A. Ronnan & Co. of Halifax. Prof. E.A. Holbrook of the College's staff was in charge of the inspection of the building during construction on behalf of the Government.

The main portion, on the southern half of the original Murray Building, was one story high, while the northern half was divided into two floors; the first floor was also divided in two, one part each for the ore dressing facility and metallurgical operations, and the second floor was devoted to ore sampling, storage bins and rough crushing. The timber used in the making of the building was of a heavy design, intended to make the building "a good example of modern slow burning construction."

During the 1919/20 academic year, most of the first floor laboratory space was dedicated to the industrial retraining of disabled World War I veterans. The existing machine shop could not accommodate the retaining of all of those students in machine tool operation, and so an annex was provided for this purpose. On the second floor, three large rooms were partitioned off for the use of garage mechanics classes; the mining and metallurgical machinery which was displaced as a result was largely disassembled and removed. This state of affairs continued until May 1921, when the industrial training equipment was dismantled and plans were made for the reinstallation of the mining and metallurgical machinery. By January 1922, the reinstallation was not entirely completed, but enough of the equipment was in working order to allow the conduction of ordinary commercial tests in leading processes of ore treatment. Unable to secure proper accommodation from the City of Halifax for the evening technical education classes, the Murray Building was obliged to have laboratory space devoted to automotive repair, hampering its use for College-related purposes.

During the 1921/22 academic year, a gallery was built along the north side of the building's central portion and equipment was installed for both testing mechanically-driven fans and illustrating the laws of mine ventilation.

The original Murray Building was destroyed by fire in March 1932 and rebuilt "of fireproof construction" in 1933; the new building was the same external size as the previous one but with an additional story (Baker 7). The plans and specifications were designed and drawn by Mr. C.A. Fowler, an alumnus of the College, and the work was contracted to Brookfield Construction Co. of Halifax. Alumni C.P. Roper and W.H. Noonan supervised the construction and supplied & erected the structural steel respectively.

The new floorplans were more accommodating than those of the old Murray Building, as the ground floor was enlarged by excavation and extended to the four walls and the third floor was enlarged as well, making for three complete, full-sized floors. Secondary technical educational facilities and the mining laboratories were given separate accommodations to allow them to exist in the same building without their activities interfering with each other. The new building's flat roof - which was consistent with the other buildings on campus - was made of gypsum, tar and gravel, while the building itself was made of fireproof materials: steel, concrete, cement floors and tile walls, with wood used only for doors and window sashes.

The third floor was home to two classrooms, a drafting room, two offices, a drafting room, a mine ventilation gallery, a storeroom, an ore bin, a sampling floor and a washroom. The second floor held a grinding room, an ore testing lab and the crushing section of the three-story-high mill plant which occupied the back of the building; the first (ground) floor held the treatment section of the mill and an ore storage room. The rooms and laboratories for automotive mechanics, plumbing and welding, as well as a shooting gallery, were on the first and second floors, off to one side of the building.

In 1947, the Departments of Chemical and Metallurgical Engineering were established and both were housed in the Murray Building. Two years later, two laboratories were added, for organic chemistry and geology & mineralogy respectively, both completed in time for September 1949 and the new academic year.

In 1951, the physical metallurgical labs were moved to the MacDonald (D) Building and stayed there until 1966, when an extension added to the F (engineering laboratories) Building allowed the Chemical Engineering Department to leave the space it occupied in the Murray building - the metallurgical labs simply moved into the space that the Chemical Engineering Department vacated.

During the summer of 1966, the building was refaced, followed by internal and external renovations in 1967.

During the 1973/74, a new laboratory, a storeroom and a small machine shop were built in the basement of the Murray Building.

During the 1974/75 academic year, the Physical Metallurgy and part of the Chemical Metallurgy operations of the Department of Mining and Metallurgical Engineering were moved from the Murray Building to the A.E. Cameron (P) Building. The vacated space was given to the Atlantic Industrial Research Institute and the Committee for the Laboratory Investigation of Minerals.

During the 1981/82 academic year, a renovation was carried out which allowed space on a mezzanine floor at the building's south end to be used for classroom purposes.

During the 1984/85 academic year, a floor infill was installed to provide space for computer terminals.

During the 1985/86 academic year, the building received new mineral processing and analytical facilities.

During the 1986/87 academic year, the building received new, improved accommodation for the Minerals Engineering Centre. The equipment for the Mining and Metallurgy Departments was selected for both commercial and industrial research on provincial mineral resources as well as for instructing mining engineering students (Baker 7).

The G Building was named after the late Honorable George H. Murray, Premier of Nova Scotia from 1896 to 1923. Murray was born on June 7, 1861 in Grand Narrows, NS, and after a stint as a schoolteacher, he decided on a career in law. He was admitted to the bar in 1883 and began his practice in North Sydney, NS during the same year.

Murray's political career began in the late 1880s as an unsuccessful Liberal candidate for Cape Breton County at the provincial and federal levels, and it followed that trajectory until the resignation of then-Premier Fielding in 1896, when Murray became Premier and Provincial Secretary. Murray was elected to the House of Assembly for the constituency of Victoria County by acclamation in an August 8, 1896 by-election and both represented that riding and served as Premier of Nova Scotia for the next 27 years, which was a record for consecutive years of service for a chief executive in the British Empire.

Among Murray's significant accomplishments were the legislation of Prohibition in 1906, the extension of the right to vote to women in 1918 and the development of the Nova Scotia Power Commission in 1919. Further, Murray promoted agricultural and technical education, transportation and the production of coal and steel. Both the Nova Scotia Technical and Agricultural Colleges were established under Murray, as were such instances of progressive labour

legislation as the 1908 Factories Act and a system of workmen's compensation for on-the-job injuries. Murray made progress in health care by appointing health officers, establishing county health clinics and founding a research hospital for tuberculosis patients. Murray also pursued an active railway policy, more than doubling the amount of track in Nova Scotia over a ten-year period, and saw to the building of bridges to span gaps in the railway system.

After a quarter of a century as Premier, Murray was honoured by the entire House in 1921 when he was presented with an illuminated copy of a resolution of appreciation adopted by the House unanimously; he resigned and retired in January 1923. During his career, Murray twice declined the offer of knighthood as well as the offer to join the federal cabinet of Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier. Murray died on January 6, 1929 in Montréal, PQ.

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Ore Dressing Lab, n.d.



Ore Dressing Lab - Stamp Mill, n.d.



Ore Sample Grinding Room. n.d.

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