

The Buildings of Dalhousie University

Forrest Building

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Address: 5869 University Av.

Start Date: April Completion Date: September 1887
27, 1887

Architect: J. C. P. Dumaresq Renovation Date(s): 1921; 1945;
1947; 1958; 1960; 1983- 1985,
2002-

Contractor: A. E.
Milliken and Co.



Forrest Building, 1930?



Forrest Building Entrance, 1930?

Building History

The Forrest Building, being the only Dalhousie building from 1887 until 1914, was first known simply as the "new" Dalhousie College. Dalhousie's location since its inception in 1818 had been on the Grand Parade at Duke and Barrington Streets, but it had outgrown this setting by 1885 and began negotiations with the city of Halifax to sell the original building and relocate. The site of the new campus, at the foot of Carleton Street and bordering Morris Street, was favoured by many. It was central, yet separated from the bustle of downtown, and with ample open space around it, athletic activities and future expansion would now be possible.

The cornerstone was laid for the new Dalhousie College on April 27, 1887, by the Honourable Sir William Young, former Chief Justice of Nova Scotia. It was Young's generous donation of \$20,000 which helped finance the building. The Forrest building cost approximately \$50,000, which was spent on a cash only basis, at Young's stipulation. The contractors were A. E. Milliken and Company. The building was completed for September 1887.

The Forrest Building was designed by architect J.G. Dumaresq, in a style unique among Canadian universities at the time. The three-storey brick building was designed as a basic beginning, with future additions figuring in Dumaresq's original plans. The central tower was 145 feet high, only ten feet lower than the Citadel. The interior was spacious and bright, a great improvement over the old building, and featured an arts library of 1400 square feet and a museum, both convertible in classrooms.

The Forrest Building underwent repairs and alterations in 1921, and in periodic years afterwards it had to be refurbished and renovated for changing occupants. By 1979, it had to be closed during construction on the Dentistry Building because it was feared the blasting would cause it to collapse. By then it was decrepit and virtually vacant. Refurbishing in 1983-1985, at a cost of \$3.2 million, prepared the building to house the schools of Nursing, Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy. In 2002, a 5-year exterior restoration project began which is restoring the brick, windows,



Forrest Building Library and
Classroom, 1897

soffits, gutters, dormers, and the shingle roof.

Originally, the Forrest Building accommodated the entire university as it then existed. With the development of the Studley campus, dentistry, medicine and law remained behind. The building was renamed the Forrest Building in 1919, after Dalhousie's third President, Rev. John Forrest. Since 1985, the building has housed the Nursing, Physiotherapy, and Occupational Therapy programs.

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Forrest Building, n.d.

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The Forrest Building located on University Avenue is another of Dalhousie University's older educational buildings, n.d.



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