

The Buildings of Dalhousie University

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Henry Hicks Academic Administration Building

Address: 6299 South St.

Start Date: 1949

Completion Date: 1951

Architect: E. W. Haldenby;

Renovation Date(s): 1963;

Leslie R. Fairn

1992; 2003

Contractor: G.R. Smith

Building History



Henry Hicks Arts and Administration Building - Under Construction, c1950-1951

The Henry Hicks Academic Building existed in the mind of Dalhousie leaders for all of forty years before the necessary resources were available to build it. In 1911, Toronto architect Frank Darling surveyed the empty Studley property for Dalhousie and, together with then President A. Stanley Mackenzie, they envisioned a grand Arts building that would be a focal point of the campus. The Arts and Science faculty was housed "temporarily" in the University Club once it was built in 1921, but by the 1940s the need for larger quarters was unavoidable. The Arts and Administration Building, as it was originally called, was the chief aim of Dalhousie's 1947 Expansion Campaign, and it would be the largest building project Dalhousie had yet undertaken.

Architects Mathers and Haldenby of Toronto, who had designed several buildings at the University of Toronto, were hired in 1948 to design the new building. Locally-based Leslie R. Fairn was consulting architect. Construction cost was estimated at \$1.6 million, far more than the Senate had allotted. The Board of Governors approved the plan, though they were concerned about the grandiose tower, which added \$30,000 to the price tag. Some Dalhousians feared that costs to build and maintain the 1.5 million square foot building would drain funds available for paying quality faculty, but concerns were quelled and the building proceeded. The cornerstone was laid in 1949 by J. McGregor Stewart, chairman of the Board of Governors.



Henry Hicks Arts and Administration Building - Under Construction, c1950-1951

Architecturally, the Henry Hicks building was in keeping with the colonial style of the other buildings on campus then - the University Club, Macdonald Building, Chemistry Building and Shirreff Hall. The building's official opening took place December 1, 1951; among the distinguished guests was the Honourable Dr. Lewis William Douglas, former U.S. Ambassador to Great Britain, who received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree in the special convocation. The Arts and Administration building was bright and airy inside, with spectacular views to the south and west; complaints were heard almost immediately, though, many saying that the proportions of the tower were off.



Henry Hicks Arts and Administration Building - Exterior, November 1980

Work such as repairs to rotting window frames and deteriorating mortar was done in 1992. In the process, the luxuriant ivy covering the walls was removed, to the consternation of some. In 2003 interior renovations were carried out on the hallway and interior of Financial Services to improve lighting and update the outmoded '60s look. The basement restrooms were renovated in 2005.

The building was renamed for Henry Hicks in October 2002. Hicks was President of Dalhousie from 1963 to 1980 and steered the university through a period of immense growth, when Dalhousie transformed from "the small college by the sea" into a leading national research university. Under Hicks, a building boom brought no less than ten new buildings to the campus, the costs of which made the former president the target of considerable criticism in later years.

Today the Henry Hicks Academic Building houses classrooms, a number of student services and administration offices, as well as the Office of Research Services.

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Arts & Administration Building & Life Sciences Centre, n.d.

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Dalhousie in Winter, n.d.



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Arts & Administration Building - Low Angle Close-up, c1973



The Board & Senate Room, January 28, 1970



Student teachers at summer school, Dalhousie University, in front of Arts and Administration Building, Studley Campus, 1964

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