

## The Buildings of Dalhousie University

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# M. M. O'Brien Hall (M Building)

Address: 5217 Morris St.

Start Date: November 5, 1966

Completion Date:  
December 1967

Architect: Duffus, Romans, Single & Kundzins (architectural firm)

Renovation Date(s):  
1979/80;  
1985/86

Contractor: Fraser-Brace Maritimes Ltd. (supervised by the Nova Scotia Department of Public Works)



M.M. O'Brien Hall Residence - Exterior  
- 1, May 1990

## Building History

The O'Brien student residence building has seven floors and a basement. Its exterior is finished in "Shaw's New Glasgow brown brick" ("O'Brien Hall First Residence...").

Originally:

- the residence was built for 132 male students in 66 single rooms and 33 double rooms;
- floors three to seven each had two family units, each consisting of six single rooms, three double rooms, a lounge and a washroom;
- the second floor had a family unit, a music room, a library and an apartment for a resident staff member;
- the first floor had a reception area, a kitchen and separate dining rooms for the students and the faculty and an apartment for a resident staff member ("O'Brien Hall First Residence...").



This student residence's financing came from the Nova Scotia Technical College's Alumni Association - which formed a fundraising committee in 1963 chaired by Mr. Percy A. Lovett to raise the downpayment on the building from appeals to College alumni - the Canada Council and the Province of Nova Scotia, with a large part of the financing done with a loan from the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). Initially, the building project was budgeted at approximately \$800,000, with the Alumni Continuing Fund and the province both contributing \$25,000, the Canada Council contributing \$50,000 and the CMHC providing a loan for the remaining \$600,000. When it became apparent that the project would cost just over \$1 million (\$1,028,167), the College's Board of Governors agreed to proceed nonetheless, and the additional \$200,000 required was carried as an interest-free loan from the College's Expansion Fund. However, additional fundraising drives

M.M. O'Brien Hall Residence - Exterior  
- 2, May 1990



M.M. O'Brien Hall - Construction, n.d.

were required by both the College Fund Raising Committee and the Alumni Continuing Fund as a result.

The building was designed by architectural firm Duffus, Romans, Single & Kundzins of Halifax, NS and constructed by Fraser-Brace Maritimes Ltd. under the supervision of the provincial Department of Public Works. The construction, which was the College's Centennial project, was given an official start on November 5, 1966, during the College's Alumni Weekend activities, as officiated by Mr. Lovett and attended by Nova Scotia Premier Robert L. Stanfield, College President George W. Holbrook and Mr. John H. Dickey, a director of the building's contractors, Fraser-Brace Maritimes Ltd., with the Rev. Dr. W.E. Jefferson delivering the blessing. The cornerstone was laid in April 1967, and the building was completed in December 1967, delayed from September 1967 by plumbers' and bricklayers' strikes over the summer. The building had its official opening on November 4, 1967, in a ceremony attended by Dr. and Mrs. M.M. O'Brien, among other dignitaries.

During the 1979/80 academic year, one-and-a-half floors of the building were converted into office space for the College's Continuing Education/Technical Outreach Services, with a Placement Office run by Canada Manpower and the offices of the newly-established Centre for Energy Studies (CES) in place shortly thereafter, although the CES offices would move to the main floor of the Engineering Laboratory (F) Building during the 1980/81 academic year.

During the 1985/86 academic year, solar panels were installed on the roof of the building for the passive heating of domestic hot water.

The residence building was named after Dr. Melbourne M. O'Brien, who was born in Springhill, NS and graduated from Nova Scotia Technical College in 1913 as a Mining Engineer. After graduation, Dr. O'Brien returned to his home province of British Columbia and started his professional career in mining operations as a shift boss with Consolidated Mining and Smelting; he eventually became the company's Superintendent of Operations for Western Canada. Dr. O'Brien served during World War I and worked on munitions plant construction and operation during World War II, lending his services to Allied War Supplies. Dr. O'Brien furthered his career with Bralorne Mines Ltd. in Vancouver, BC, for which he served as Executive Vice-President and Managing Director from 1944 until his retirement in 1959. Dr. O'Brien was awarded his honorary Doctor of Engineering degree by the College in 1957.

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M.M. O'Brien Hall - Opened November 4, 1967, n.d.



M.M. O'Brien Hall - Opened November 4, 1967 [Dining Area], n.d.

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