

## *The Buildings of Dalhousie University*

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# Life Sciences Centre - Biology & Earth Science

Address: 1355 Oxford St.

Start Date: August 1969

Completion Date:  
1971

Architect: Affleck, Desbarats

Renovation Date(s):  
1991;

Contractor: Desourdy  
Construction Limited



Life Sciences Centre - Aerial - Looking North, Spring 1977



Biology Wing of Life Sciences Centre,  
n.d.



Life Sciences Centre - Panoramic

## Building History

The Life Sciences Centre, begun in 1969, was the first development on the western side of campus. It is one building with three unique sections for the Biology, Psychology and Oceanography departments, which share common areas, lecture halls, facilities and workshops.

The Life Sciences Centre was designed by Ray Affleck of the Montreal firm Affleck, Desbarats. They had the challenge of designing an "infill" building, one that had to fit between the existing buildings all around it. The site also had Halifax ironstone close to the ground's surface which had to be excavated before construction could begin.

Affleck's design was highly innovative and a deliberate departure from the cut-stone of the other campus buildings. The building would be of poured concrete with the finish sandblasted to show the aggregate underneath. A few sanguine supporters called the building "a very happy escape from rectangularity," but most were not won over by its utilitarian and labyrinthine interior. Nevertheless, the Centre won an award of excellence from the Canadian Architectural Yearbook in 1968.

What could not be disputed was the excellent facilities that the Life Sciences Centre added to Dalhousie, enhancing its prestige with the capability to conduct sophisticated research in the marine sciences. Increased space and up-to-date equipment expanded teaching and research methods. Students benefited from a photographic suite, microscopy area, radiation facility, herbarium, 8-section greenhouse and animal house. High pressure labs simulated deep sea conditions and wet labs and aquatic tanks were supplied by salt-water lines connected to the Northwest Arm.

The building cost over \$18 million in the end, plus \$1.9 million for the seawater line and department equipment. \$5 million of this total came from the Atlantic Development Board; \$1 million from the National Research Council; \$12.75 million from the provincial

View, n.d.

government under the University Assistance Act; \$500,000 from federal and provincial tax rebates; and the remainder in bond financing.

Contractors on the project were D $\diamond$ sourdy Construction Limited of Montreal. Construction, begun in August 1969, was completed in 1971 in time for occupation by the fall. A special convocation opened the Life Sciences Centre on April 19, 1974; present were Nova Scotia Premier Gerald A. Regan; Minister of Regional Economic Expansion Donald C. Jamieson; Dalhousie President Henry Hicks; Board of Governors Chairman Donald McInnes; Contractor Roland D $\diamond$ sourdy; and architect Ray Affleck. The Address to Convocation was given by Nova Scotia Member of Parliament Allan J. MacEachen, future Deputy Prime Minister under Trudeau and later Liberal leader in the Senate.

In 1991 the creation of the Ocean Production Enhancement Network necessitated an addition to the eighth floor of the Life Sciences Centre to create office space, at which time upgrades and renovations were also carried out at a cost of \$2.4 million. This addition won the Lieutenant-Governor's Design Award for Architecture.

Today the Life Sciences Centre boasts an observatory, the Thomas McCulloch Museum, greenhouse, and the Aquatron, a specialized salt water research facility. The building remains the home of the Biology, Psychology and Oceanography departments of Dalhousie, along with Earth Sciences, the Institute for Research Materials and the Trace Analysis Research Centre.

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- [Aerial photo of the southwest quadrant of Dalhousie's University's Studley Campus - 2]. n.d. Dalplex Photos - General [file], Item 33.

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- Life Sciences Centre - Official Opening. April 1974. PC1, 3.5.
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Life Sciences Centre - Biology  
Greenhouse Close-up, c1973



Life Sciences Centre - Biology Section  
1973/74, January 15, 1974



Life Sciences Centre - Exterior - Side View - 1, 1994



Life Sciences Centre - Exterior - Side View - 2, 1994



Life Sciences Centre - Exterior - Side View - 3, n.d.



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Life Sciences Centre - Under Construction - Construction Cranes, November 25, 1970



Life Sciences Centre - Under Construction, 1971



Life Sciences Centre - Official Opening - Centre: Dalhousie University President Henry D. Hicks, April 1974



Life Sciences Centre - Official Opening Plaque - April 19, 1974, September 14, 1979 [date on photo]

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Life Sciences Building - Mid-January Snowstorm, January 18, 1982



Model of the proposed Life Sciences Centre, n.d.



New 8th floor addition to LSC, July 1991

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