

The Buildings of Dalhousie University

Macdonald Building

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Address: 6300 Coburg Rd.

Start Date: 1914 Completion Date: Fall 1915

Architect: Andrew R. Cobb; Frank Darling Renovation Date(s): 1921; 1956; 1963; 1965; 1991

Contractor: Falconer & McDonald

Building History



Macdonald Library, n.d.

The Macdonald Memorial Library was a building Dalhousie planned long before it had the means to build it. It was named for Charles MacDonald, mathematics professor at Dalhousie from 1864 until his death in 1901. MacDonald was a popular and inspiring professor, dedicated to supporting Dalhousie's growth. He bequeathed the university \$2000 to buy books, in recognition that one of the school's chief weaknesses in the early 20th century was its library. Fundraising brought the Macdonald Memorial Library Fund to \$33,000 by 1905, but there was no space to build. Not until the purchase of the Murray homestead in 1911 (the Studley campus) did Dalhousie's spacious new campus make the library possible.



Macdonald Library Kipling Room (reading room), n.d.

The Macdonald Memorial Library was designed by Toronto architect Frank Darling and Andrew R. Cobb of Halifax, the same team who designed the Chemistry Building and other early structures on the Studley campus. It was a small building that had to fit in a limited space west of the Chemistry Building and east of the family homestead at the crown of the hill.

On April 29, 1914, the cornerstone of this second Studley building was laid by a colleague of Charles MacDonald's, the Reverend Allan Pollock. At the ceremony, President A. Stanley Mackenzie said in his speech that MacDonald had himself been a foundation stone of Dalhousie. Construction proceeded under contractors Falconer & MacDonald, and was completed by the fall of 1915 at a total cost of \$90,000. The building was moved into in the summer of 1916.



Macdonald Library after Halifax Explosion, ca. December 1917

At first the library contained only offices and the large and airy reading room on the second floor. In 1921 a five-storey expansion added the much-needed stack area on the north side. The stacks' capacity for 125,000 volumes was insufficient to hold the entire collection, so the Chemistry, Physics and Geology departments housed their own libraries and the remainder of the books was stored in the library's attic.

On July 20, 1956, a special convocation was held to celebrate the opening of another addition on the building's west side. The O. E. Smith Wing was built of quartzite and ironstone in the same Georgian colonial style as the other original buildings. The new wing housed the Kipling Room, setting for the new collection of Rudyard

Kipling's works given to Dalhousie by James McGregor Stewart, a graduate of the Law school and later Director of the Royal Bank of Canada.

By the 1960s complaints were frequent about the crowded conditions - for books and study space - in the Macdonald Library. In the summer of 1963 a mezzanine was created in the Reading Room to increase the capacity by one third. At this time the stacks were 99 percent full! A third addition in 1965 joined the Macdonald Memorial Library to the Science Building, creating 40,000 square feet of new floor space (but for the Chemistry department).

It was acknowledged by this time that the library needed either a major extension or a brand new building; it got the latter when the Killam Library opened in 1971. The Macdonald Memorial Library then became the Macdonald Science Library until the science collection was moved to the Killam Library in 1989. In 1991, a one million dollar anonymous donation enabled Dalhousie to convert the stacks of the former library into offices for the Alumni, Development and External Relations offices, locations they still occupy today. As well, the old Reading Room was refurbished to be a meeting and special event room, now called University Hall.

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Contractor: Falconer &
McDonald

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- MacDonald Library - Kipling Room. n.d. PC1, 28.5.
- MacDonald Library - Morse Room. c1930-1939. PC1, 31.11.
- MacDonald Library interior - book stacks. August 1923. PC1, 31.11.
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- MacDonald Memorial Library - exterior, evening. n.d. PC1, 31.13.
- MacDonald Memorial Library - exterior. n.d. PC1, 31.13.
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- MacDonald Memorial Library after Halifax Explosion, 1917. ca. December 1917. PC1, 31.12.
- Science building and MacDonald Memorial Library, Studley Campus. June 1922. PC1, 31.27.



Macdonald Library - O.E. Smith Wing, n.d.



Macdonald Building - Exterior - Front Entrance - Winter - Side View, n.d.

Pharos Yearbook

- [Aerial view of Studley campus]. Pharos. 1941, [p. 87].
- [Macdonald Building, west side]. Pharos. 1988, p. 7.
- [Macdonald Library looking south]. Pharos. 1941, p. 9.
- [Macdonald Memorial Library]. Pharos. 1930, p. 19.



Artist's Impression: Macdonald Building, Chemistry Extension Building and Chemistry Building, October 6, 1964



Macdonald Building - Exterior - Front - Angle View from West, n.d.



Old Chemistry Building & Macdonald Library Before the Chemistry Extension Building Was Added In 1966, [ca. 1960s]



Macdonald Library, n.d.

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Macdonald Science Library, 1971



Macdonald Science Library, n.d.



Macdonald Sciences Library,
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Plaque in Macdonald Library, November 1971 (date on photo)



Humanities Study Room - Macdonald Memorial Library - Dalhousie University, n.d.



Reading Room, Dalhousie University Library. n.d.

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