

The Buildings of Dalhousie University

Weldon Law Building

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Address: 6061 University Av.

Start Date: 1965

Completion Date: 1966

Architect: M. H. F.
Harrington

Renovation Date(s): 1986-
1987; 1989; 2004

Contractor: Eastern
Contracting Limited

Building History



Weldon Law Building, c1975-1980

The Weldon Law Building is the latest home of the Dalhousie Law School, which was founded in 1883. Originally the Law school was in the Dalhousie College building on the Grand Parade, then in the Forrest Building and, from 1952 to 1967, the present University Club. The University Club was already an inadequate space by the time the Law school moved in, and a larger Law building was a part of the Board of Governor's long-term development plans from the late 1950s. By the mid-60s, Law enrolment was expected to double in the upcoming years.



Weldon Law Building - Sir James
Dunn Law Library - Interior, n.d.

The Weldon Law Building became possible in 1965 through significant capital funding from the province; Dalhousie was required to cover twenty percent of the cost. The building was designed by Halifax architect M.H.F. Harrington of Webber, Harrington & Weld. It is named for Richard Chapman Weldon, the first full-time instructor of common law in Canada, a Member of Parliament and the first dean of Dalhousie's Law School, from 1883 to 1914.

Construction of the building was contracted to Eastern Contracting and was completed in 1966 with a final cost of just over \$1.8 million. An opening convocation took place on March 18, 1967, that included the official opening of the Sir James Dunn Law Library. Sir James Dunn was a generous and longstanding donor to the university after his graduation from the Law school in 1898, and after his death in 1956 his wife, Lady Beaverbrook, continued his generosity through the Sir James Dunn Foundation. The Weldon Building's opening was attended by Lieutenant-Governor H.P. MacKeen; Premier Robert L. Stanfield; President of the Canadian Bar Perrault Casgrain; Board of Governors Chairman Donald McInnes; University President Henry Hicks; Law Dean W.A. MacKay; Chief Justice of Nova Scotia L.D. Currie; and Lady Beaverbrook, who unveiled the plaque for the library and received an honorary degree.

The 78,000 square feet Weldon Building included classrooms, lounge space, faculty offices, and a library on the fourth and fifth floors. The architects and faculty members collaborated to try and accommodate future needs in a functional building that would facilitate student-faculty connection. The building was also the first



Lady Dunn opens Law Library, 1966

at Dalhousie for which an interior decorator was hired. It was thought by some that the starkness of other campus buildings justified the expenditure to make Weldon more stylish and inviting.

In August 1985, a lightning strike caused an electrical malfunction, igniting a fire which destroyed the library on the fifth floor. Hundreds of books were lost and many more damaged; however, the fire was called a "mixed tragedy" for the law library because it had been so rundown and overfilled. The fire spurred the construction of a four-storey addition on the north side of the building in 1987-1988 to house a bright - and improved - library. This project was made possible by Lady Beaverbrook, Law Foundations across Canada, and alumni and friends of the university. Restructuring during the restoration of the rest of the damaged building also opened up more space and made the interior more accessible.

In 2003-2004, the two main classrooms in the Weldon Building (104 and 105) were overhauled to improve acoustics, air and lighting. Room 105 was equipped to double as a moot court, and has a judge's bench, small stage and audiovisual capability.

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