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Two Hundred Years of Physics at Dalhousie (I)

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Dalhousie University was established in 1818 through an act of the Nova Scotia Legislature. Proper function of the College, however, did not commence until 1838 and it ceased again in 1848 when the College reverted to a high school. A reorganization of Dalhousie took place in 1863 when an Act of the Legislature incorporated Dalhousie as a University. In 1877 the Dalhousie board appointed J.J. Mackenzie to the first chair of Physics (previously Physics was known as Natural Philosophy) in Canada. In 1879 J.J. MacKenzie died and the University found itself in great financial difficulty. George Munro, a rich business man and publisher in New York, offered to endow a chair for physics at \$2000 per year. This beginning of Munro's benefactions brought George MacGregor to Dalhousie as first George Munro Professor of Physics (1879 - 1901). The department has always had high standards in both research and teaching and in this respect Howard Logan Bronson (FRSC), George Munro Professor and department head (1910 - 1945), deserves special mention. The department produced, with minimal funding from NRC, 32 master's theses and students, after obtaining Ph.D.s. at other institutions, occupied prominent positions in universities and industry. Seven of these were elected fellows of Royal Societies. The construction, in 1960, of the Dunn Science Building through the munificent benefaction of Lady Dunn launched the department into the big leagues. Installation of a helium liquefier allowed cutting edge research in condensed matter physics and the department was now accredited to grant Ph.D.s. The talk will present an overview of subsequent research directions and touch on some research accomplishments.

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