

From Reading Courses to Robson Hall: The Development of Legal Education in the Province of Manitoba, 1877–1968

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ABSTRACT

The following traces the development of legal education in Manitoba from the late 19th century to the 1969 opening of Robson Hall. In keeping with the mandate of volume 42:2 of the *Manitoba Law Journal*, attention will be given to the role played by Hugh Amos (H.A.) Robson in the creation of the Manitoba Law School. First opened in the fall of 1914, the law school was the result of nearly a decade's worth of work by Robson and the Law Society of Manitoba. Prior to that point, legal education in the province had been marred by poor funding, a general lack of support, and most notably, the absence of a permanent location.

LEGAL EDUCATION PRIOR TO THE MANITOBA LAW SCHOOL

What we would today call “legal education” first developed as a concept in Manitoba in and around the 1870s.¹ It was then that the nascent Law Society of Manitoba – acutely aware that the vast majority of the province's lawyers were receiving their education elsewhere –

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¹ Dale Gibson & Lee Gibson, *Substantial Justice: Law and Lawyers in Manitoba 1670 – 1970* (Winnipeg: Peguis Publishers, 1972) at 128 [*Substantial Justice*].

adopted a series of protocols for the purposes of training law students.² Interested parties could now choose to take a series of written exams, administered by the Law Society, followed by an apprenticeship under a practicing lawyer. All told, the entire process would take about five years to complete.³

Unfortunately, the new protocols did little to increase demand for legal education. They fared so poorly in fact, that by 1874, only a single student had successfully finished the program.⁴ The Law Society's response was to organize a series of educational lectures for the purposes of broadening interest. E.B. Wood, then Chief Justice of Manitoba, delivered the first in the summer of 1877.⁵

The lecture series was successful in drumming up interest, and by 1884, nearly a dozen students had completed the protocols.⁶ Seeking to capitalize on this, the Law Society entered into a partnership with the University of Manitoba to further expand their educational offerings. The result was the creation of a reading course that would grant students a Bachelor of Laws degree (LL.B.).⁷

First offered in the spring of 1885, the joint Law Society/University reading course asked students to read approximately twenty-one legal treatises over a period of three to five years. They would then write a series of exams, once again administered by the Law Society.⁸ The first to complete the program was Andrew W. Thompson, who graduated after three years of study in 1888.⁹

² *Ibid.*

³ Jack R London, "The Admissions and Education Committee: A Perspective on Legal Education and Admission to Practice in the Province of Manitoba, Past, Present and Future" in Cameron Harvey, ed, *The Law Society of Manitoba 1877-1977* (Winnipeg: Peguis Publishers, 1977) 74 at 77.

⁴ *Substantial Justice*, *supra* note 1 at 128. The province's first law student was Edmund Wood, the son of Manitoba Chief Justice, E.B. Wood.

⁵ *Substantial Justice*, *supra* note 1 at 179.

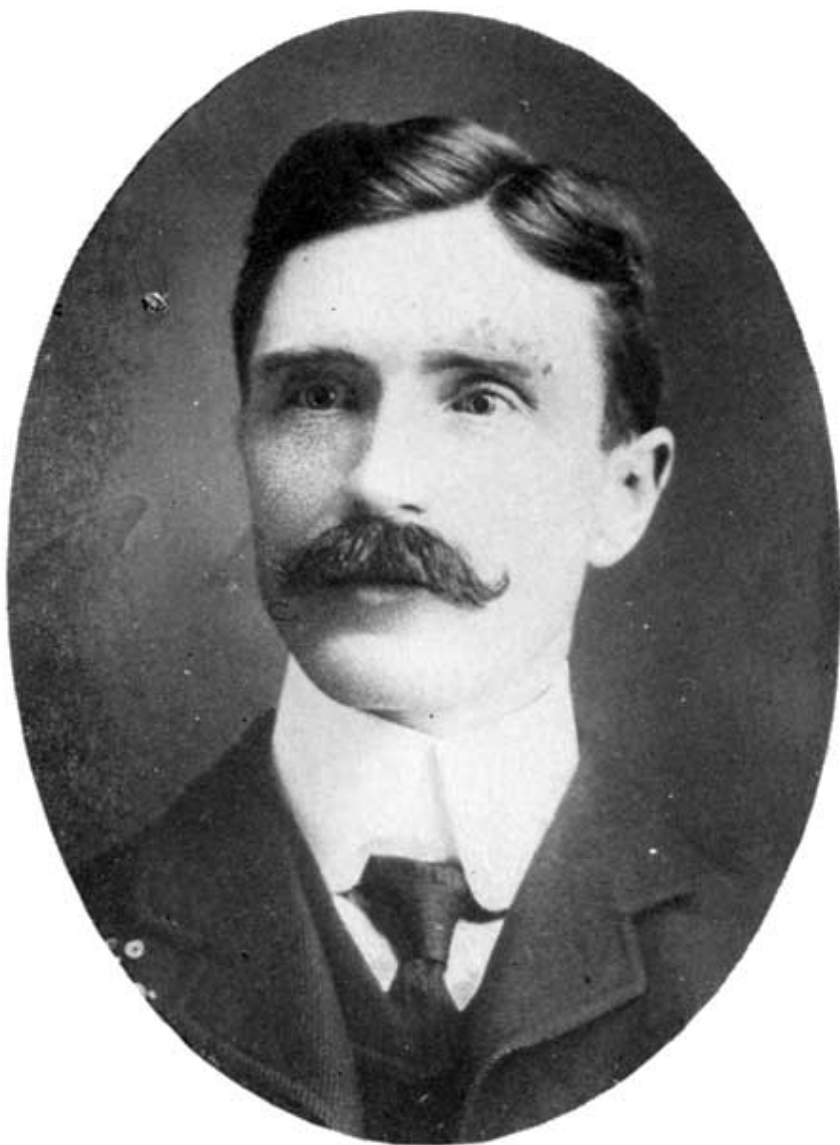
⁶ London, *supra* note 3 at 77.

⁷ William Lewis Morton, *One University: A History of the University of Manitoba 1877 - 1952* (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1957) at 28.

⁸ *Ibid* at 29.

⁹ *Ibid.*

Isaac Pitblado, the future president of the Law Society and founder of Pitblado Law, was the fourth person to finish, doing so in 1889.¹⁰



¹⁰ *Substantial Justice*, *supra* note 1 at 152. Picture of Isaac Pitblado, date unknown.

University of Manitoba.

EXAMINATIONS, MAY, 1887.

EXAMINATION, MAY, 1887.—SECOND YEAR.

TODD ON PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT.

EXAMINERS, { Hon. Mr. Justice Dubuc.
Hon. Mr. Justice Killam.

Time—Three hours.

1. Define government by prerogative.
2. What was the Act of Settlement? What circumstances led to its enactment?
3. In what matters does the Sovereign represent the State in its dealings with foreign nations?
4. State the nature and constitution of the *curia regis*.
5. Sketch shortly the origin of the Cabinet Council.
6. What is the position of the crown with reference to the administration of justice?
- *7. Discuss generally the constitutional position of the Sovereign of Great Britain.
- *8. Discuss, after Todd, the principles upon which a dissolution of a parliament should be had, and the conduct of public business pending a dissolution, having reference respectively to the position of the Sovereign, the Ministers of the Crown and the Opposition.

*Questions thus marked are to be answered only by candidates for honors.

University of Manitoba.

EXAMINATIONS, MAY, 1887.

CANDIDATES FOR LL.B.

PUBLIC INTERNATIONAL LAW.

EXAMINERS: { Hon. Mr. Justice Dubuc,
Hon. Mr. Justice Killam.

Time—Three hours.

1. What states are subject to international law?
2. How was the special law of neutrality formed?
3. In what does the territorial property of a state consist? Mention the various modes by which it may be acquired.
4. State the nature of *postliminium* and the limitations on its operation.
5. What are the effects of a treaty of peace terminating a war between states?
6. In what does "blockade" consist?
- *7. What is "intervention?" Discuss the character of the doctrine and the grounds warranting its exercise.
- *8. Trace shortly the growth and present state of International Law with reference to the articles to be ranked as contraband.

*For honors only.

Reading Course exams from May 1887¹¹

H.A. ROBSON AND THE CREATION OF THE MANITOBA LAW SCHOOL.

Eventually, demands for more educational resources would prompt the Law Society to begin considering investment in a permanent law school. Among those to lend their support to this idea was H.A. Robson, who by that point was already an established member of the province's legal community. To Robson, a law school was integral to the well-being of the profession and he

¹¹ University of Manitoba Examinations (May 1887), Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (UA 43, PC 139).

pictured Manitoba possessing an institution on par with the likes of Osgoode Hall and McGill University.¹²

To drum up support for his vision, Robson approached several influential figures within the legal community. Among those solicited were James Aikins (Robson's former employer and arguably the most powerful lawyer in the province) and Alexander Haggard, the President of the Law Society. Both agreed to back the project, albeit with one major condition. The new law school, they insisted, should be administered jointly by the Law Society and the University, as had been done with the LL.B. reading course.¹³

Due in part to Robson's professional friendship with University Vice-Chancellor Joseph Royal, a deal was brokered that would see both institutions work together once more. The result was the creation of the Manitoba Law School, a new academic institution to be run by both the Law Society and the University.¹⁴ The *Recommendations in Regard to Legal Education*, first agreed upon in the spring of 1914, formally recognized this partnership and enacted the following administrative provisions:

- i. A board of five trustees would be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Manitoba Law School. The board would also be responsible for selecting a fifth member, to serve as Chairperson.
- ii. Student tuition fees would be set by the Board of Trustees and re-evaluated annually.
- iii. Revenues generated by the law school via grants and tuition fees would be applied to the maintenance of the law school.
- iv. The LL.B. degree would continue to be offered, with students expected to complete it over a three-year span. Graduating students would then be admitted to practice.
- v. Articling would occur during the second and third years of study.¹⁵

¹² Cameron Harvey, *Historic Legal Winnipeg*, 3rd ed (Winnipeg: publisher unknown, 2016) at 10.

¹³ Historical Accounts (4 January 1911), Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (UA 43, PC 139).

¹⁴ *Substantial Justice*, *supra* note 1 at 152.

¹⁵ *Recommendations in Regard to Legal Education* (1914), Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (UA 43, PC 139 A 97-30).



Hugh Amos Robson (date unknown)¹⁶

¹⁶ Lawyer member photograph - Robson, Hugh Amos (date unknown), Winnipeg, Archives of Manitoba (M-92-8-17 file 25).



Hugh Amos Robson (date unknown)¹⁷

¹⁷ Gordon Goldsborough, “Memorable Manitobans: Hugh Amos Robson (1871 – 1945)” (last modified 21 January 2019), online: *Manitoba Historical Society* <http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/robson_ha.shtml> [perma.cc/Z9CA-8Z2H].

Notable Alumnus: Melrose Sissons

At the turn of the twentieth century, the practice of law in Manitoba remained an exclusively male profession. That changed in 1911 however, when a woman by the name of Melrose Sissons applied for admission to the LL.B. reading course.¹⁸ Sissons, who would go on to complete the program four years later, would become the first woman in Manitoba called to the Provincial Bar.¹⁹



Melrose Sissons (1911)²⁰

¹⁸ Gordon Goldsborough, "Memorable Manitobans: Ellen Ann Melrose Sissons (1887 - 1973)" (last modified 25 April 2018), online: *Manitoba Historical Society* <http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/sissons_eam.shtml> [perma.cc/Y3NK-HUKH].

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ #77 Archive of Western Canadian Legal History - Melrose Sissons (April 1911), Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (ACC No A2684).

II. THE YMCA YEARS: 1914–1916

With the formal ratification of the Manitoba Law School now in place, Robson (who had recently been named Chairperson) and the board turned their attention to procuring a permanent home for the new institution. Unfortunately, both the University and the Law Society were unable to offer accommodations, so as a temporary measure, a lease agreement was finalised that would see the law school move into the new YMCA building in downtown Winnipeg.²¹ In doing so, the Manitoba Law School likely became the first academic institution in Canada to hold classes inside a men's health club.

Regardless of this fact, enrollment for the inaugural year was still high. All told, approximately 108 students were accepted into the program, a far greater number than had originally been estimated.²² Classes were scheduled daily from 9:00 to 10:35 am and again from 4:30 to 5:15 pm, with the break in-between designed to accommodate the articling obligations of second and third-year students.²³



YMCA Building, Winnipeg²⁴

²¹ *Substantial Justice*, *supra* note 1 at 216.

²² E K Williams, "Legal Education in Manitoba: 1913 – 1950" (1950) 28 Can Bar Rev 759 at 763.

²³ *Substantial Justice*, *supra* note 1 at 217.

²⁴ "Postcard 13520" (last modified 2009), online: *Peel's Prairie Provinces: University of Alberta Libraries* <<http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/postcards/PC013520.html>> [perma.cc/45KH-DZPZ].

The Manitoba Law School officially opened its doors on October 5th, 1914. James Aikins was on hand to deliver the keynote address, which humorously was delivered from the inside of a gymnasium.²⁵

LECTURE SCHEDULE (Subject to variation) FIRST YEAR					
	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
9.00-9.45	English Constitution Contracts	Real Property	Personal Property	Criminal Law	English Constitution
9.50-10.35		Torts	Contracts	Real Property	
4.30-5.15					
SECOND YEAR					
9.00-9.45	Equity Personal Property	Evidence Canadian Constitution	Personal Property	Equity Real Property	*Procedure †Roman Law
4.30-5.15					
THIRD YEAR					
9.00-9.45	Torts Partnership and Company Law	*Procedure, (8 & 9) Contracts	Municipal Law Real Property	*Procedure, (8 & 9) †International Law	Equity
4.30-5.15					
†History of English Law—Time to be announced later.					
* Compulsory as to Law Society students only. † Compulsory as to University students only					

The inaugural curriculum of the Manitoba Law School (1914)²⁶

Notable Event: R.P. Hills, The Manitoba Law School's first appointment

Initially, the staff of the Manitoba Law School consisted of just one full-time faculty member, a British-born barrister by the name of R.P. Hills. Well known for his writings on legal theory, Hills was living in British Columbia when he was first approached by Robson about the possibility of teaching.²⁷

Upon accepting the appointment in late August of 1914, Hills was promptly named "School Recorder."²⁸ His first task in this position was to develop an academic curriculum, no easy chore with the start of classes just a few months away. To assist him with this endeavour, Hills hired-on seven practicing lawyers from within the province's legal community. The final result

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ 1914 Faculty Lecture Schedule (October 1914), Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (UA 43, PC 139).

²⁷ *Substantial Justice*, *supra* note 1 at 216.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

was a curriculum largely modeled after the likes of Osgoode Hall, a decision which would have surely pleased Robson.²⁹

Hills would remain in the position of Recorder until the summer of 1918, when he chose to resign due to a salary dispute. He was replaced in the interim by R.J. Russell, who interestingly enough, was not a practicing lawyer.³⁰

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One per cent. for any distance not exceeding 1,000 miles, and two per cent. for any greater distance.

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W. MacKenzie

PRESIDENT

SENT NO.	SENT BY	REC'D BY	TIME SENT	TIME FILED	CHECK
Send the following Message subject to the above terms, which are hereby agreed to:					
3rd Sept. 5.30 p.m.					
To <u>R.P.Hills,</u>					
<u>Fenticton, B.C.</u>					
<p>The Board has under consideration the appointment of a Recorder and lecturer for the present academic year. Please wire whether you would be prepared to accept position at twenty seven hundred on terms as formerly and when you could be here. Please send immediate answer by wire so that Board may make its decision at once. Meeting to be held Friday forenoon.</p>					
R.J.Russell.					

READ THE NOTICE AND AGREEMENT AT THE TOP

Letters of Recommendation for Dr. Rowland Hills³¹

²⁹ London, *supra* note 3 at 78.

³⁰ *Substantial Justice*, *supra* note 1 at 247.

³¹ Correspondence Re: Letters of Recommendation for Dr. Rowland Hills, Former Recorder (1923 - 1924), Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (A165).



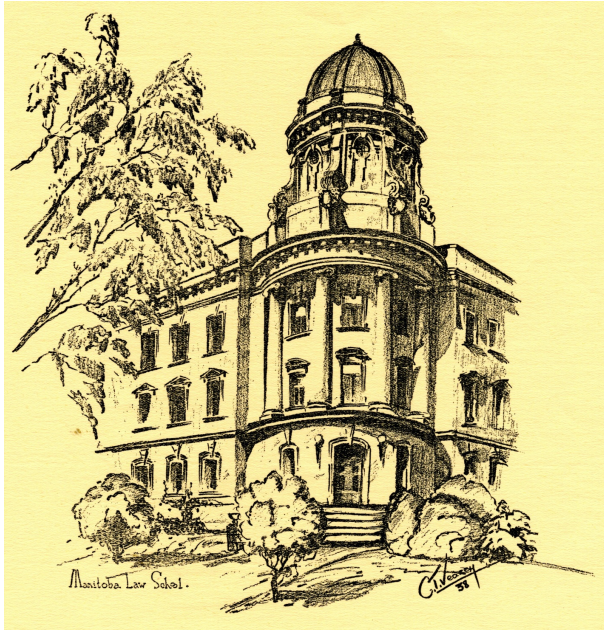
R P Hills (date unknown)³²

³² Picture of R P Hills (date unknown), Winnipeg, Robson Hall Faculty of Law.

III. THE MANITOBA LAW SCHOOL AT THE LAW COURTS BUILDING: 1916–1938

After nearly two years inside the YMCA, the Manitoba Law School was granted permission to move its location to the newly constructed Law Courts Building.³³ Built at a cost of over one million dollars, the downtown courthouse came equipped with several exceptional features that had been sorely lacking at the law school's previous home. This included ample study space, an abundance of courtrooms, and a fully functional library.³⁴

Unfortunately, some members of the legal community came to view the law school's presence as an encroachment on their professional space. Students were largely banned from entering certain areas of the building and their library access was severely curtailed. To make matters worse, the law school was forced to use the dining area as its primary lecture space, meaning students often took classes alongside lawyers eating their lunches.



The Manitoba Law School (1938)³⁵

³³ *Substantial Justice*, *supra* note 1 at 247.

³⁴ Williams, *supra* note 22 at 766.

³⁵ Artist's rendering of the Manitoba Law School (1938), Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (A189).

One positive to emerge during this period was the hiring of Joseph “J.T.” Thorson as the law school’s first-ever Dean. Thorson, a Rhodes Scholar and veteran of the First World War, used his 1921 appointment to enact immediate change to a program he viewed as stale and “behind-the-times.”³⁶ Articling obligations were shortened from two years to one, while the school’s curriculum, which had not been updated since Hill’s departure in 1918, was changed based on recommendations from the Canadian Bar Association.³⁷

Thorson would serve as Dean until 1926, when he was elected as a Member of Parliament for the Liberal Party of Canada. His impact on legal education in Manitoba is perhaps best exemplified by the law school being named to the Carnegie Institution’s “top university programs in Canada” list for the years 1926 and 1927.³⁸

Notable Event: The 1918 Manitoba Influenza Epidemic

Following the conclusion of the First World War, the province experienced a deadly influenza outbreak that took the lives of hundreds of people. Thought to have been brought back by troops returning from Europe, the virus forced every school and university to close their doors by way of government decree.³⁹ This included the Manitoba Law School, which had just begun its 1918-1919 academic year.

In order to accommodate the closure, law school trustees created a “mail-in” system to administer course work and examinations. Now, instead of attending classes, students would mail their reading notes and assignments to instructors. Marking from a quarantined location somewhere in the city, the instructors would subsequently grade the work and mail it back. Textbooks, examinations and administrative information were all delivered using the same methods.⁴⁰

Thankfully, the Influenza Epidemic came to pass by the end of 1919 and the Manitoba Law School was able to resume in-person lectures. A total of

³⁶ *Substantial Justice*, *supra* note 1 at 247.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid* at 248.

³⁹ Morton, *supra* note 7 at 39.

⁴⁰ Procedure discussing the epidemic (198), Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (A63).

60,000 Canadians died from the flu during this time, including close to 1,200 in Winnipeg alone.⁴¹

Notable Event: The Depression Years

Like most academic institutions in Canada, the Manitoba Law School was impacted by the harsh realities of the Great Depression.⁴² During the years 1929–1938, staff salaries were cut (sometimes by as much as 50%), while class sizes dropped significantly (In one extreme case, the graduating class of 1930 featured just a single student).⁴³ Yet in spite of these hardships, the school was still able to hire four, full-time instructors and in 1934 appointed a new Dean, Thomas Laidlaw.



Laidlaw, a veteran of the First World War, had personal experience with the law school, as he had graduated from the institution in 1921.⁴⁴ Yet as one of his first acts in charge, he chose to break with tradition and raise tuition fees to \$125 per year.⁴⁵ Although making Laidlaw somewhat unpopular, the decision was necessary, he believed, to recoup losses suffered at the hands of the depression.⁴⁶

T.W. Laidlaw (1941)⁴⁷

⁴¹ Christian Cassidy, “Spanish Influenza visits Manitoba” (3 October 2013), online (blog): *West End Dumplings* <<http://westenddumplings.blogspot.com/2013/10/spanish-influenza-visits-manitoba.html>> [<https://perma.cc/5PT5-DEJV>].

⁴² *Substantial Justice*, *supra* note 1 at 268.

⁴³ *Ibid* at 269.

⁴⁴ Gordon Goldsborough, “Memorable Manitobans: Thomas Walter Laidlaw (1897 – 1965)” (last modified 28 January 2017), online: *Manitoba Historical Society* <http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/laidlaw_tw.shtml> [perma.cc/3395-3ZPE].

⁴⁵ *Substantial Justice*, *supra* note 1 at 268.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*.

⁴⁷ Photograph of Lt-Comdr T.W. Laidlaw (1941), Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (A3611).

Notable Alumnus: Samuel Freedman

A graduate of the Manitoba Law School in 1933, Samuel Freedman would go on to become Chief Justice of the Manitoba Court of Appeal. Throughout his long and impactful career, Freedman was also named to the Order of Canada in 1984 and the Winnipeg Citizens Hall of Fame three years later.⁴⁸



Samuel Freedman (date unknown)⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Gordon Goldsborough, "Memorable Manitobans: Samuel Freedman (1908 – 1993) (last modified 10 November 2015), online: *Manitoba Historical Society* <http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/freedman_s.shtml> [perma.cc/Y3NK-HUKH].

⁴⁹ Photograph of Samuel Freedman (date unknown), Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (A7190).

IV. THE MANITOBA LAW SCHOOL AT THE “OLD” COURT HOUSE: 1938 - 1950

By 1938, there were multiple indications that the Great Depression’s economic devastation was finally subsiding. Attendance to the Manitoba Law School increased for the first time in a decade and funds were made available to replace faculty and staff lost to austerity.⁵⁰ Significantly, the end of the Depression also precipitated another change in location for the law school, this time to the more spacious confines of the “Old” Court House on Broadway Avenue.⁵¹

First built in 1883, the “Old” Court House had once served as the primary court of law within the province. Yet it had mainly sat empty since the completion of the newer, more pristine Manitoba Law Courts Building in 1916. This made it the perfect location for the law school, as it offered students and faculty access to several spaces that were no longer in use. This included lecture halls, multiple courtrooms, and a library large enough to accommodate dozens of patrons.⁵²

The law school would remain occupants at the “Old” Court House until 1950. By then, it had become a major safety concern and was no longer fit for habitation. Closed for good that spring, it was demolished six years later after a major fire destroyed most of the building.⁵³



The Winnipeg
Courthouse
(date unknown)⁵⁴

⁵⁰ London, *supra* note 3 at 78.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid* at 79.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ The Winnipeg Courthouse (date unknown), Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (A133).

Notable Alumnus: Brian Dickson

One of Canada's most famous jurists, Brian Dickson was also a graduate of the Manitoba Law School, receiving his LL.B. degree in 1938. Following a successful career as a corporate lawyer, Dickson was appointed to the Court of Queen's Bench in 1963. From there he would go on to serve on the Manitoba Court of Appeal, before ultimately receiving an appointment to the Supreme Court of Canada in 1973.⁵⁵

A liberal for most of his life, Dickson quickly became known as one of the more progressive members of the Court. Together with fellow Puisne Judge Wishart Spence and Chief Justice Bora Laskin, he created a progressive voting block the media came to dub the "L-S-D Connection."⁵⁶

Dickson's legacy was further cemented in 1984 when he was elevated to the position of Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, a position he would hold until 1990.⁵⁷



Robert George Brian Dickson⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Robert Sharpe & Kent Roach, *Brian Dickson: A Judge's Journey* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003) at 26.

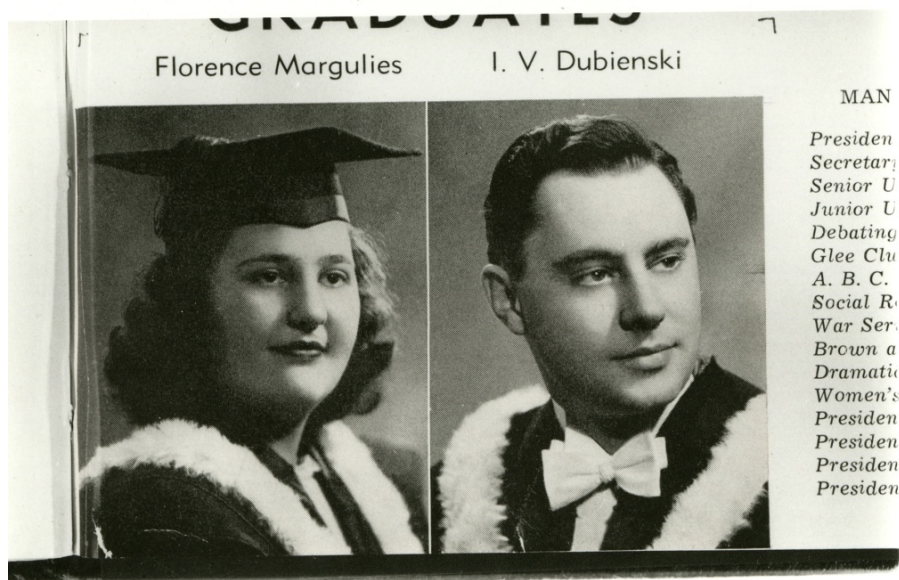
⁵⁶ *Ibid* at 14.

⁵⁷ Sharpe & Roach, *supra* note 55 at 7.

⁵⁸ Lawyer member photograph - Dickson, Robert George Brian, Winnipeg, Archives of Manitoba (M-92-7-5 file 69).

Notable Event: World War II

Canada's decision to enter World War II had a noticeable impact on the Manitoba Law School. Dozens of students abandoned their studies to join the war effort, resulting in a decrease in enrollment not seen since the early years of the Great Depression.⁵⁹ Attendance plummeted so rapidly in fact, that by 1945, the school was only prepared to graduate two students (see below).



The graduating class of 1945⁶⁰

To compensate for this, the Board of Trustees shortened the academic calendar and drastically curtailed the number of lectures offered.⁶¹ They also began to employ more part-time and sessional instructors to account for the diminished revenues.⁶²

⁵⁹ *Substantial Justice*, *supra* note 1 at 272.

⁶⁰ Photograph of the graduating class of 1945 (1945). Winnipeg, Robson Hall Faculty of Law.

⁶¹ *Substantial Justice*, *supra* note 1 at 272.

⁶² *Ibid.*

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the changes were met with open hostility from faculty and members of the legal profession. Fearful that a shortened academic year would diminish the quality of legal education, they openly aired their frustrations via the pages of the *Manitoba Bar News* and the *Winnipeg Free Press*.⁶³ A 1942 article entitled, “Decline of the Law School” was especially damaging and predicted a drop in enrollment should changes not be implemented.⁶⁴

Struggles aside, the Law School did make noticeable efforts to accommodate students serving overseas. In partnership with the Law Society, it passed a measure that allowed members of the armed forces to reduce their time spent articling upon return from active duty.⁶⁵ The program proved to be immensely popular and resulted in several student-veterans returning to law school following the war’s end. In an ironic twist, the Law Society would order the termination of the program soon afterwards for fear that too many graduates were entering the legal profession without an adequate articling experience.⁶⁶

V. THE POST WAR YEARS: 1945–1968

The post-war years marked a period of expansion for the Manitoba Law School not seen since its formal opening. Total enrollment soared, while a record number of faculty members were given appointments.⁶⁷ These dramatic changes were accompanied by a 1950 move back to the Manitoba Law Courts Building, which had originally housed the law school from 1916 to 1938.⁶⁸

Unfortunately, the rise in enrollment also meant that, for the first time in decades, there would not be enough articling opportunities available to students.⁶⁹ As a counter-measure, the Law School created a course in 1947 aimed at assisting those who were unable to procure employment. Commonly known as the “practice class”, it offered instruction to students on everything from building a resume to the proper etiquette needed when taking a job

⁶³ “Decline of the Law School”, *Winnipeg Free Press* (12 October 1942) A-11.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Morton, *supra* note 7 at 112.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Substantial Justice*, *supra* note 1 at 288.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* at 290.

interview.⁷⁰ David Golden, a World War 2 veteran and future recipient of the Order of Canada, was brought in to teach.⁷¹



The Manitoba Law School (1953)⁷²

Notable Event: Creation of the Faculty of Law

It was also during this period that the existing relationship between the Law Society and the University became no longer tenable. The legal profession in Manitoba had nearly tripled in size since 1914, and the Law Society no longer possessed the resources needed to administer a fully functioning law school.⁷³

⁷⁰ Manitoba Law School – course descriptions (1948-1953), Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (A3774).

⁷¹ *Substantial Justice*, *supra* note 1 at 290.

⁷² Photograph – Manitoba Law School (1953), Winnipeg, Archives of Manitoba (M-92-7-5 file 69).

⁷³ *Ibid* at 302.

The University was also going through changes of its own, moving away from partnership agreements with non-academic entities, in favour of more control over its faculties.⁷⁴

Talks surrounding a dissolution of partnership were first initiated in 1964 and ratified two years later.⁷⁵ As per the arrangement, the Law Society also agreed to hand over complete control of the Manitoba Law School to the university, thereby ending its 52-year involvement with the institution. University administrators subsequently shuttered the old program and in its place created the Faculty of Law.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ University of Manitoba strategic planning initiative (1958), Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (A461).

⁷⁵ To the Members of the Law Society of Manitoba Re: Practical Training of Law Students (1964), Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (A3618); Joint University of Manitoba, Law Society of Manitoba Termination Agreement (1966), Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections [Termination].

⁷⁶ Termination, *ibid.*

This agreement made in duplicate as of the 1st day of July, A.D. 1966.

B E T W E E N:

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA,
(hereinafter called "the University"),

Of The First Part,

- and -

THE LAW SOCIETY OF MANITOBA,
(hereinafter called "the Society"),

Of The Second Part,

- and -

THE TRUSTEES OF THE MANITOBA LAW SCHOOL,
(hereinafter called "the Trustees"),

Of The Third Part.

WHEREAS following discussions between representatives of the University and the Society, the parties agreed to the establishment in 1914, of The Manitoba Law School to be managed by a Board of Trustees consisting of representatives of both parties, to the cost of which the parties were to contribute equally;

AND WHEREAS the said agreement appears in the minutes of the Council of the University of the 14th of June 1914, and of the Society of the 11th of June 1914, and was confirmed by Section 8 of an Act to amend the Law Society Act, 1915 Statutes of Manitoba, Chapter 37; and whereas the said Section 8 has remained in force and is now Section 40 of Chapter 115 of the Revised Statutes of Manitoba 1954;

AND WHEREAS The Manitoba Law School continued to provide instruction in law up to the 1st day of July, 1966, at which date,

Agreement terminating partnership between the Law Society and University⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Ibid.

Notable Event: The Need for More Space

By the 1960's, it was becoming apparent that the Manitoba Law Courts Building was no longer the proper location to house the burgeoning faculty. Enrollment was on the rise, and the court lacked the space needed to accommodate the increase (in fact space was at such a premium during this period that students took to studying in the restrooms and fire escapes).⁷⁸ The courthouse also lacked a number of amenities, deemed essential "in most modern law schools."⁷⁹ This included a faculty lounge and a locker room for students.⁸⁰

To alleviate the problem, the University devised an ambitious plan to move the faculty to a yet-to-be constructed building on the northeast corner of their Fort Garry campus.⁸¹ Notable architecture firm Ward and MacDonald Associates were chosen to oversee the project and construction was earmarked to begin in the summer of 1966.⁸²

The original design called for the creation of a 65,000 square foot building that would stand four stories high and feature over 200 windows. Importantly for the faculty, it would also house more lecture halls than its predecessor, as well as a moot courtroom, library, and student common room. In fact, the new home was so spacious, that if one were to transplant the old courthouse space into the new building, it would take up only one floor.⁸³

The total cost of the project was set at \$1,625,000, thereby making it one of the university's more ambitious construction projects to date. Ward and MacDonald promised a building with a "modern aesthetic" that would stay true to the university's pre-existing "architectural landscape."⁸⁴

⁷⁸ *Substantial Justice*, *supra* note 1 at 304.

⁷⁹ Cliff Edwards & Dale Gibson, "Memorandum on the Future Status and Location of the Manitoba Law School" (2016) 39:2 Man LJ 91 at 93.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Memorandum on the Future Status and Location of the Manitoba Law School: The Need for More Accommodation (date unknown), Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (A3712).

⁸² Letter from Ward and MacDonald Associates – Re: New Building for the Manitoba Law School (21 June 1966), Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (A3715) [Re: New Building].

⁸³ Edward Unrau, "U of M Law Faculty Gets Own Building", *Winnipeg Free Press* (12 June 1969) at 3.

⁸⁴ Re: New Building, *supra* note 82.

The only opposition to the project came from the adjacent University College.⁸⁵ The college, which had been described by the *Winnipeg Free Press* as the “centre of campus radicalism and undergraduate frivolity”, proclaimed their incoming neighbours as, “too conservative and too serious.”⁸⁶ They also worried that the new building would negatively affect their campus living arrangements.⁸⁷



Design for the Faculty of Law⁸⁸

VI. THE OPENING OF ROBSON HALL: 1969

Work concluded on the faculty’s new home in the fall of 1969. By that point, university administrators had agreed to rename the building (and the program it housed), after H.A. Robson, the founder of the Manitoba Law School.⁸⁹ Although Robson had passed away nearly twenty years prior, his son, Hugh

⁸⁵ Unrau, *supra* note 83 at 3.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

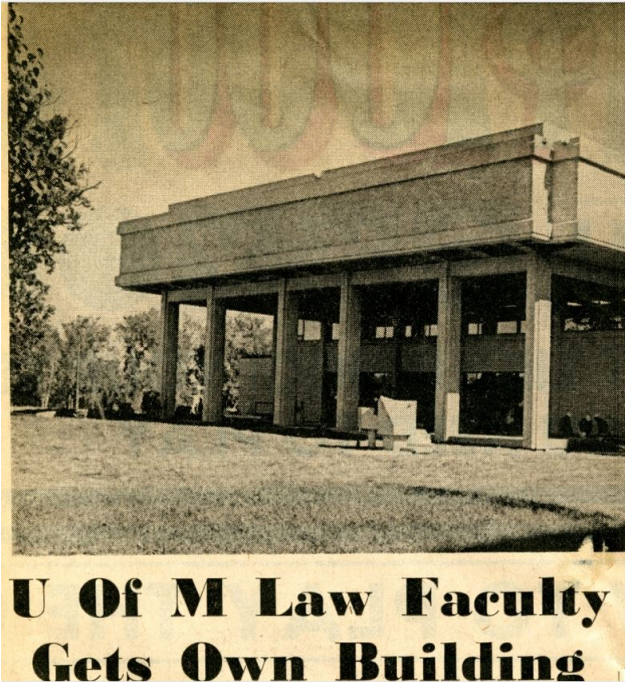
⁸⁸ Photograph of design for faculty of law – Ward and MacDonald Associates (date unknown), Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (A3718).

⁸⁹ London, *supra* note 3 at 79.

Robson agreed to be on hand for the formal opening of the building later that fall.⁹⁰

The grand opening of the newly christened Robson Hall was held on September 15th, 1969. Among those in attendance that day were Lord Gardiner, the High Chancellor of Great Britain, Arthur Goldberg, a former Justice of the United States Supreme Court, and John Turner, the future Prime Minister of Canada.⁹¹ Robson himself was also honoured, via the unveiling of a plaque bearing his likeness.⁹²

Ironically, the building itself was not ready to hold classes yet, as a few minor construction projects had yet to be completed. When it did finally open that November, Robson Hall played home to 250 full-time students, 15 faculty members, and 6 part-time lecturers, the largest law faculty on the Canadian prairies.⁹³



Law Faculty Building Opening in the *Winnipeg Free Press*⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Letter from the family of Hugh Amos Robson to Faculty of Law (11 May 1969), Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (A411).

⁹¹ Robson Hall - Grand opening program (15 June 1969), Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (A381).

⁹² "Legal Schools Shape Country - Gardiner", *Winnipeg Free Press* (17 September 1969) at 68.

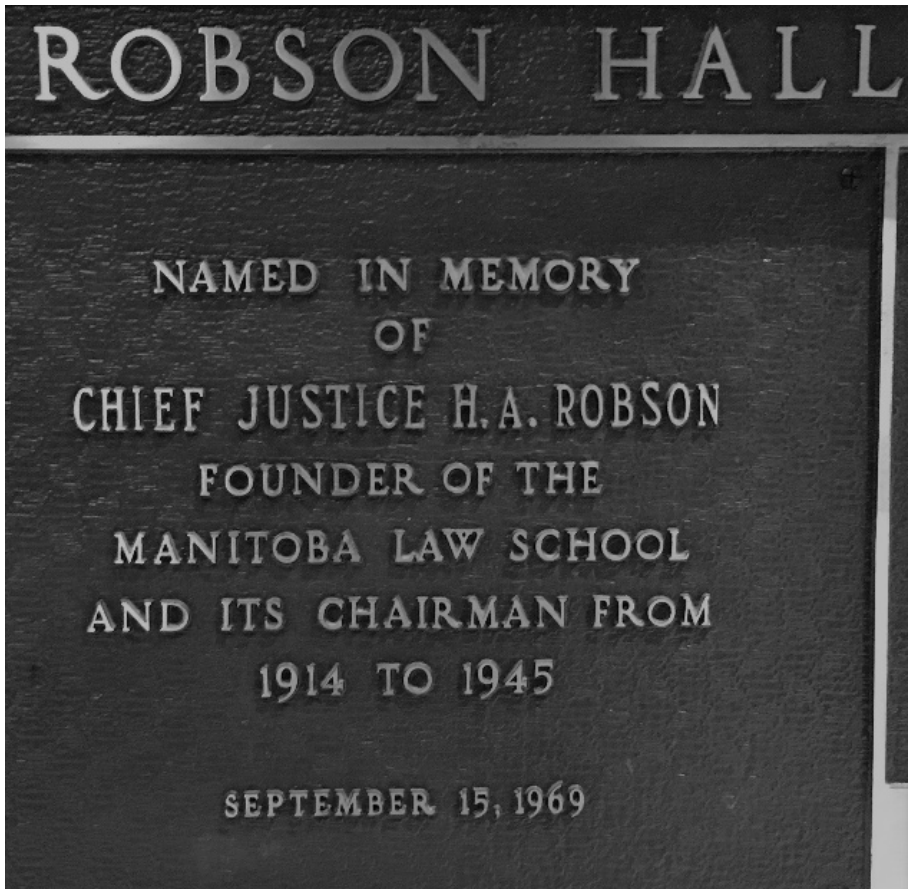
⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Unrau, *supra* note 83 at 3.



Lord Gardiner
and the
opening of
Robson Hall
(1969)⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Photograph of Lord Gardiner - opening of Robson Hall (1969), Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (A3722).



H.A. Robson's commemorative plaque (1969)⁹⁶

Author's Note: For more information on legal education in Manitoba and the creation of the Manitoba Law School/Robson Hall Faculty of Law, please consult Volume 39 (issues 1 and 2) of the *Manitoba Law Journal*.

⁹⁶ Photograph of H A Robson's commemorative plaque (1969, Winnipeg, Manitoba: University of Manitoba, Robson Hall, Faculty of Law).