

King's College was an improbable institution to serve as the birthplace for engineering education. Founded at the time New Brunswick became a province, it had been patterned after the classical arts and sciences academy concept of Oxford and Cambridge. No evidence of useful enterprise was noted in the college. And the faculty did nothing to reassure the public that they intended in any measure to assist in the development of the resources of the Province. Indeed, it may be argued that Dr. Edwin Jacob actively opposed any form of condescension to the implementation of practical instruction. Sir Edmund Head, Lieut. Governor of the Province had sensed soon after he arrived that the public mood was particularly venomous towards the college and undertook to find some means to preserve the institution. To that end he wrote to the Hon. J.H. Gray, Registrar for the college, early in 1849: "I am extremely desirous that a course of lectures in Agricultural Chemistry should be delivered at Fredericton during the sitting of the Assembly. . . . I look upon the diffusion of scientific information relating to Agriculture as a most important object to the Province."

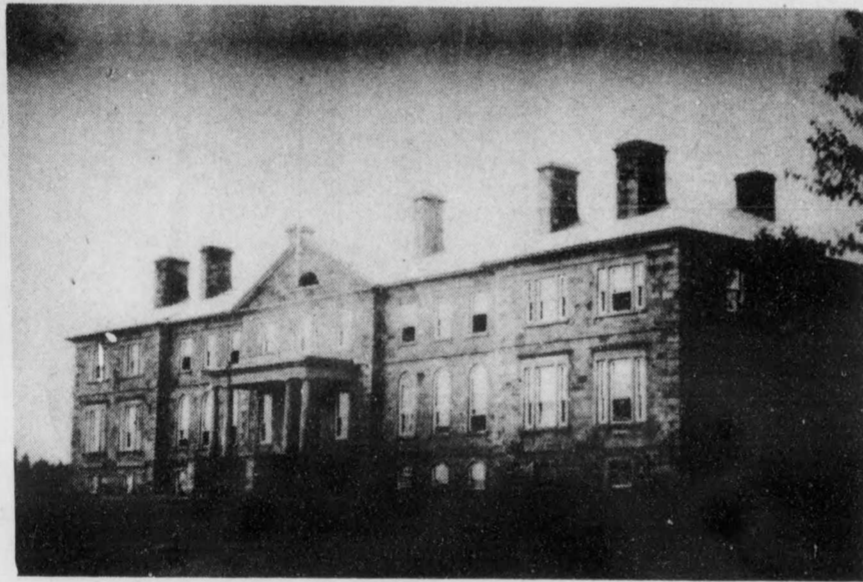
Head suggested that part of a vacant professorship should be used to pay Dr. Robb, but the College Council refused, whereupon Sir Edmund undertook to pay Robb out of his own pocket. Dr. Jacob staunchly refused to consider such instruction as scholarly, or even as bearing on the public charge to the College to provide higher education. Indeed, in his Encaenial address of June 26, 1852, Dr. Edwin Jacob defended the College position with the following statement:

*For our purposes - they may, I trust, be all comprised in that one word, Duty - the faithful, diligent, and zealous discharge, - more faithful, [if possible] diligent and zealous than ever, of the obligations of our place and time. To those who would make the college a polytechnic institution we may not promise much more in the way of merely practical teaching; we must not listen to the cry which calls us from the pursuit of truth and virtue to the lower paths and grosser occupations of the multitude; we will not yield to the suggestions which would tempt us to pander to the unworthy passions, flatter the prejudices and vain conceits, or court the boisterous plaudits, of factions or the casual crowd.*

With such bold sentiments did Dr. Jacob dismiss the cry of the populace to the College to heed to the needs of the Province with a more practical curriculum than that then offered. We may gather some measure of the dislike of the townspeople of Fredericton for the college and its students from Lieut. Col. Baird's memoirs, published in 1890 as "Seventy Years of New Brunswick Life". Writing of the time when, as an apprentice to the druggist's trade, he was required to learn something of Latin. He entered the Collegiate, then affiliated with King's College, in an effort to accomplish this task. "Many of the boys," he wrote, "were sons of the so-called aristocracy of that day, and Segee and myself were subjected to no small amount of taunts and sneers, at and after the competitive examinations which twice in each year were held on the hill at King's College." And further on, on the same subject, "I



Early Head Hall



Kings College Before 1876

On February 15, 1854, the first course of study in Engineering at a Canadian University was begun at the University of New Brunswick (then King's College). The following program of events is planned for February 15, 1979 to commemorate this historic occasion.

PROGRAM OF EVENTS — FEBRUARY 15, 1979

1. Afternoon Lecture: Dr. R.F. Legget, P.Eng., formerly Director of Building Research, National Research Council of Canada, will address students, faculty and interested members of the community on the topic — *Canadian Engineering Achievements*. This lecture will be presented at 2:30 p.m. in the Dineen Auditorium in Sir Edmund Head Hall, U.N.B., Fredericton.
2. Reception: Dr. R.E. Burridge, Dean of Engineering will host a reception in Sir Edmund Head Hall following the afternoon lecture. The public is cordially invited to attend.
3. The 125th Anniversary Lecture: This commemorative lecture will be presented at 8:00 p.m. in the Dineen Auditorium, Sir Edmund Head Hall, by Dr. R.F. Legget. Dr. Legget's address entitled, *The Canadian Engineer's Responsibility — Past and Future* will be open to all interested members of the community and the University.
4. Refreshments will follow the 125th Anniversary Lecture.

have seen one of our late judges, when attending King's College, enter the Fredericton Library and in a flood of tears relate to my father the indignities he was made to suffer from the class of young men referred to above."

Sir Charles Lyell, writing on the subject while visiting with Sir Edmund Head in September 1852, remarked to Leonard Horner that the college was "rendered useless and almost without scholars, owing to an old-fashioned Oxonian of Corpus Christi, Oxford, having been made head, and determining that lectures in Aristotle are all that the youth in a new colony ought to study, or other subjects on the strict plan which may get honours at Oxford. I trust that Sir Edmund may succeed in his exertions to get something taught which the pupils can afford to spend their time in learning. At present they must go to the United States."

The "Oxonian" Sir Charles referred to was, of course, Dr. Jacob. And while Dr. Jacob continued to exert his influence on the direction of education at King's College for the next several years, it was left to Sir Edmund Head, no mean classicist himself, to perceive that for the College to continue it must give some more tangible evidence of utility. Writing to the Chief Justice who filled the position as Chancellor of King's College, on September 28, 1852, Sir Edmund noted: "The elements of science and natural history as applied to arts and manufacturers, including agriculture, the theory of ship building or navigation, mensuration, surveying, and civil engineering, all these might be offered as being immediately and practically useful in enabling a boy to earn his own bread."

Elsewhere in his letter he states: "I desire to rescue the College from what I consider a position of comparative inaction and consequent danger. I desire to anticipate agitation or complaint by energetic action on the part of the College Council; and, however temporary my connection with New Brunswick may be, I desire to afford all the aid in my power towards promoting and diffusing superior education in this Province." Thus it was that this extraordinary man, a visionary much ahead of his time, should point the way to the salvation of the College. It is indeed a pity that the College authorities were so entirely entrenched in their dogmatism. Had they acted with despatch upon Sir Edmund's suggestion much anguish could have been averted over the next decade. In fact, prompt action would have rendered King's College among the foremost Universities in the Commonwealth for at least the next half century.

As it was, no formal mechanism for action was agreed, except that a committee was struck by the College Council to investigate Sir Edmund's suggestions. This committee reported to the Council March 16th, 1853, with three recommendations, the second of which was: "It has been suggested by his Excellency, and the Committee beg to concur in the suggestion, that more specific attention might be given to Civil Engineering, that is to its leading principles, and that if assistance be required in the department of drawing, it should be provided by the Council."

Although Dr. Jacob presented himself as one opposed to a change in the college structure in any measure, the other professors