

# UBC Physics - before the Hennings Building

The Physics Department lived through interesting times before the Hennings building was built.

1920: T. C. Hebb makes Head of Department, A. E. Hennings hired.

Left: T. C. Hebb  
Right: A. E. Hennings



1915: UBC opens in the "Fairview Shacks" at 10th and Laurel. Four physics courses offered in the Faculty of Arts (later Arts and Science).

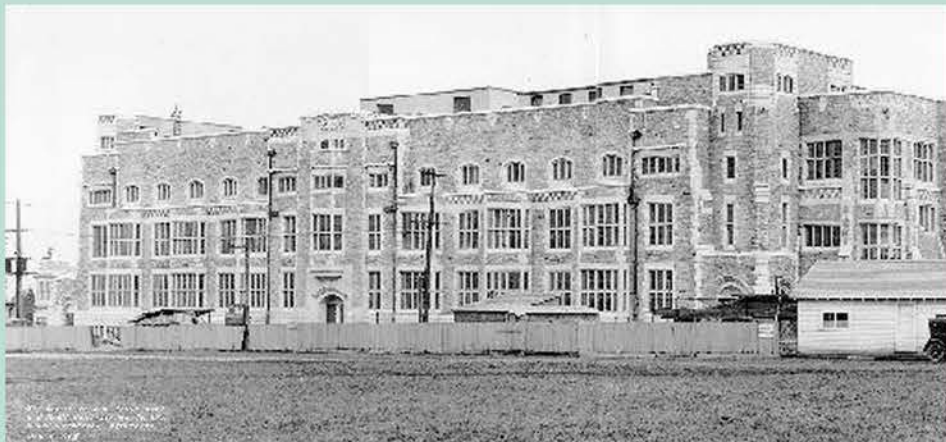


Physics laboratory at Fairview, 1919



UBC Fairview Campus

1925: UBC moves to the Point Grey Campus; Physics moves into the Science Building (now Block D of the Chemistry Building, the oldest building on UBC campus).



Science Building under construction



1926: Gordon Shrum\* hired as Assistant Professor; Walter Gage awarded an MA.

\* Subject of another poster



1934: George Volkoff\* receives a BA and the Governor General's Gold Medal.

\* Subject of another poster

1933: Patrick McTaggart-Cowan receives a BA; he later went on to be a Rhodes Scholar, Royal Air Force Chief Meteorologist in WWII responsible for all ferry flights across the Atlantic, and first President of SFU.



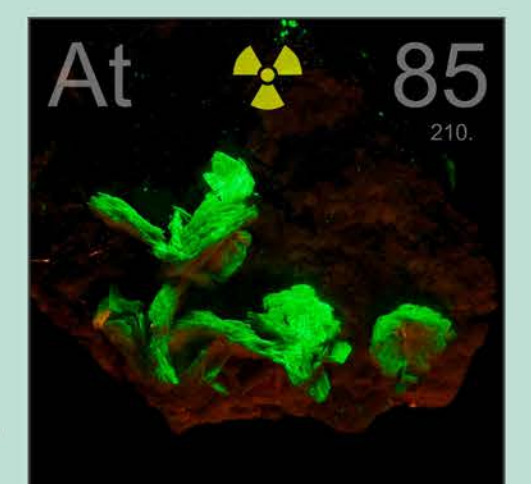
Liberator at Montréal Airport en route across the North Atlantic in winter



1937<sup>b</sup>: Shuichi Kusaka (left), President of the UBC Physics Society, receives a BA and the Governor General's Gold Medal, also going on to a PhD with J. Robert Oppenheimer, and later becoming a Professor at Princeton. He worked with Pauli, Wheeler and others on cosmic ray physics before his life was cut short in a tragic swimming accident in 1947.

Image: from "When An Old House Whispers..." blog by historian James Johnstone ([http://househistorian.blogspot.ca/2010\\_09\\_01\\_archive.html](http://househistorian.blogspot.ca/2010_09_01_archive.html)).

1935: Kenneth McKenzie receives a BA, going on to a PhD with Lawrence at Berkeley, and co-discovering astatine, element 85.



Right: image by MarlonMarin used under CC BY-SA 3.0.

1935<sup>a</sup>: Robert Christy (below) receives a BA and the Governor General's Gold Medal, going on to a PhD with J. Robert Oppenheimer at Berkeley, and a significant role in the Manhattan Project. The "Christy Pit" is the design of the plutonium core at the heart of an implosion bomb).



Robert Christy's wartime Los Alamos security badge



"The Gadget": the first nuclear bomb to be tested (July 1945), with Christy's "pit" at its core

1939: Ken Mann hired as Assistant Professor, later going on to distinguished WWII career developing centimetric "286" radar for the allied navies, and returning to UBC as, amongst other things, Department Head.



HMCS Restigouche, with Mann's high-resolution "286" radar at the masthead.

1947: Hennings Building\* opens and continues to be the home of UBC Physics & Astronomy now.

\* Subject of another poster



1943: Thomas Collins receives a BA, later going to receive UBC's first ever PhD (under Volkoff, in 1950), becoming an accelerator physicist (inventing "Collin's Inserts"), and eventually Associate Director of Fermilab during its construction and early years of operation.



The main synchrotron ring at Fermilab, Illinois. Image from Fermilab History and Archives Project ([history.fnal.gov](http://history.fnal.gov)).

## Acknowledgements and References:

All images from UBC Archives online ([www.library.ubc.ca/archives](http://www.library.ubc.ca/archives)) or public domains unless otherwise indicated.

This poster is largely based on information in Ed Auld and Jess Brewer's departmental history project: <http://musr.phas.ubc.ca/history/>

a. Robert J. Serber "The Los Alamos Primer", California Universities Press, 1992

b. David Bohm and Robert R. Bush, "Shuichi Kusaka, 1915-1947", American Journal of Physics 16, 61 (1948)

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