

from **CRADLE**
to **COMPUTER**

A history of St. James Square, the birthplace of Ontario education



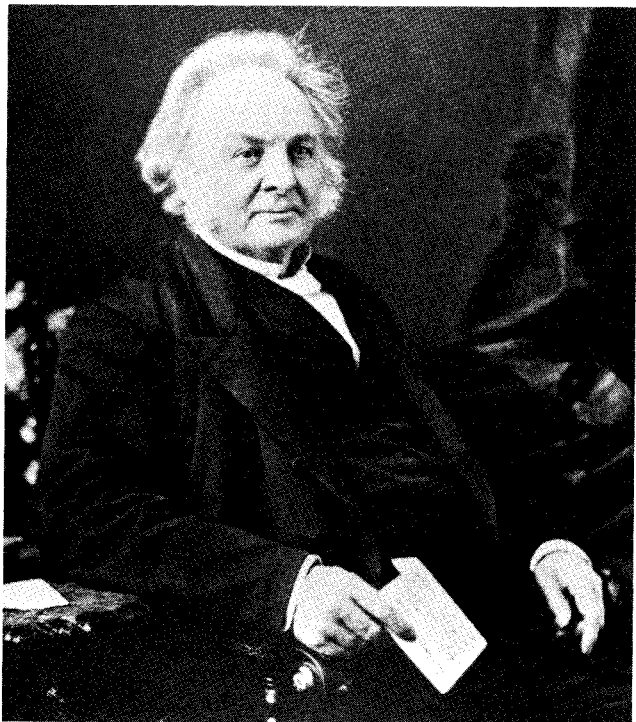
RYERSON

The main cover illustration is a representation of the facade of the Upper Canada Normal School of 1852, produced on computer-aided design equipment at Ryerson. The inset photograph is of the Reverend Egerton Ryerson, Chief Superintendent of Education from 1844 to 1876, under whose direction the Normal School was built and the public education system in Ontario launched.

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*A history of St. James Square,
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Published by
Ryerson Polytechnical Institute
for Ontario's bicentennial.
September, 1984

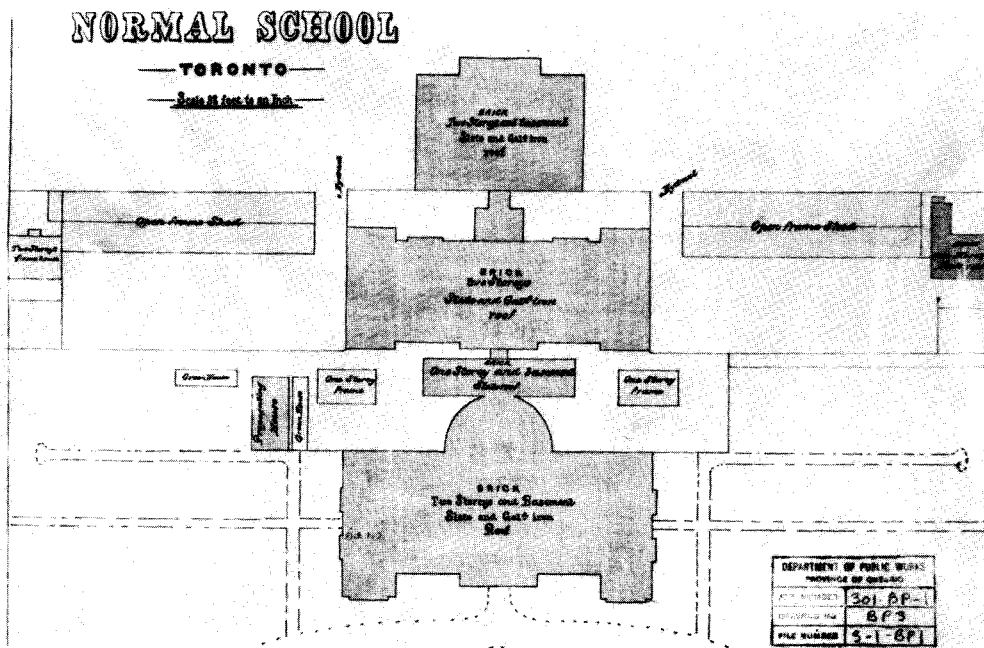


The Reverend Egerton Ryerson as he looked in later years. Before he retired in 1876, Parliament had passed all the legislation necessary for the free and compulsory education system which had been his goal.

Courtesy of Ryerson Polytechnical Institute Archives

Plans for the Normal School, the first institution in Ontario for the training of elementary school teachers, built in 1852. A Model School, in which teachers practised their profession, was added in 1857.

Courtesy of Ryerson Polytechnical Institute Archives



in the **Beginning**

It was a perfect summer day in 1850 as Egerton Ryerson walked up Victoria Street, past the newly-completed St. Michael's Cathedral, to inspect six acres of swampy ground he had just purchased on behalf of the government of Upper Canada.

Toronto's population was just under 31,000, a third of them Irish and 90% Anglo Saxon. There was a sense of anticipation in the banks and businesses that Toronto was poised on the edge of an exciting future as the commercial and industrial linchpin in the development and exploitation of the hinterland to the north and west. The feeling wasn't misplaced, for Toronto was just beginning 20 years of rapid expansion that would solidify its economic dominance in Upper Canada and beyond.

But in 1850, Toronto was still a small town of muddy streets and sandy tracks. The town stretched from the busy waterfront docks north to Dundas Street and from Parliament Street in the east to Garrison Creek (near the present Bathurst Street) in the west. Beyond these boundaries lay the hamlets of Davisville, Yorkville and Eglinton, each, like Toronto, surrounded by farms and forest.

Rev. Ryerson, a Methodist minister, and Chief Superintendent of Education, knew full well that the land he had purchased was beyond Toronto's northern boundary, but he was confident that urban growth would soon engulf the educational facility he had been charged with constructing.

For two decades before 1850, Ryerson had harbored a vision of free education for all Upper Canadian children. In the early 1800s however, there were two problems: in some areas there were no schools; and in many schools the teachers were ill-prepared. Ryerson intended to eradicate both these problems.

But not everyone agreed with Ryerson's plans. There were many who resented paying property taxes to support schools. Ryerson liked to tell the story of a magistrate who objected to "being compelled to educate all the brats in the neighborhood."

And the public attitude toward teachers was distinctly hostile—in some cases not without reason—for many schools were headed by virtually illiterate teachers who knew more about applying the strap than about mathematics, science or literature. As one publication of the day reported, teaching was reserved for those "whose physical disabilities from age render this mode of obtaining a living the only one suited to their decaying energies."

An artist's drawing of the original two-storey Normal School, with its wide-sweeping circular driveway. A third storey was added to the building in the 1890s.

Engraving by W. C. Fiher, courtesy of F. W. (Ted) Brock

Model elementary schools for girls and boys were added to the Normal School in 1857 and children from some of Toronto's most prominent families were enrolled.

Courtesy of the Archives of Ontario



the Normal School

The first Normal School—a facility for teacher-training opened in 1847 in the ballroom of the former government house in Toronto, at the corner of King and Simcoe Streets.

The Normal School was forced to vacate Government House in 1849 and Ryerson was empowered to locate a site for a permanent teacher training facility. The site he found and purchased for 4,500 pounds in 1850, lay north of Gould Street and east of Victoria Street. Its most prominent features were Taddle Creek and the redwing blackbirds that lived among the bulrushes of the marsh that covered half the property. As Ryerson stood admiring his purchase he could hear the sound of cow bells on the cattle that wandered loose nearby and the occasional rattle and rumble of the stage coaches that linked Toronto to the communities north on Yonge Street.

In 1852, the Upper Canada Normal School opened with considerable fanfare, befitting one of the largest buildings in the town. But it wasn't long before the Normal School became more than a training ground for the province's teachers. It was a book depository, art gallery, museum and

home to the offices of the provincial Education Department. The grounds around the building were used for agricultural experiments to determine the hardiness of various non-native grains. Surrounding the Normal School buildings, on the property that had come to be called St. James Square, were dozens of trees, each one different, from around the world. All of these activities earned the Square its designation as the cradle of Ontario's education system.

The impressive classical facade of the main building fronted on Gould Street and can still be seen in the quadrangle of Ryerson Polytechnical Institute. Behind this building were built, in 1857, model elementary schools for boys and girls where the student teachers were able to practise their classroom techniques under the keen eye of a provincial inspector or perhaps Ryerson, himself.

A Model Grammar School was built on the site in 1857 to train high school teachers but it closed in 1863 because few students attended, the opinion being that a university degree was sufficient in itself to teach high school.

During the 1850s and 60s, the students entering the Normal School were generally ill-prepared and the staff spent more time teaching them what



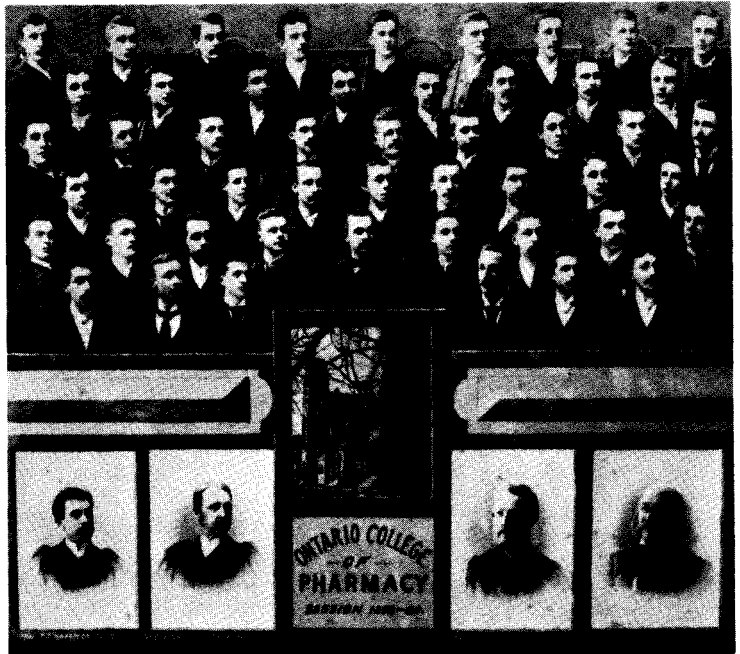
Main Archaeological Room - West View

Many of Ontario's public institutions began on or near St. James Square, including the province's first museum, which was housed in the Normal School and was the forerunner of the Royal Ontario Museum. Pictured is the original museum's main archaeological room, circa 1911.

From the *Annual Archaeological Report*, 1911, Province of Ontario

A neighbor of the Normal School, on the northern perimeter of St. James Square, was the Ontario College of Pharmacy, whose graduating class of 1889 is shown here. Today, the renovated pharmacy building is a part of Ryerson and houses the Institute's Theatre School.

Courtesy of the University of Toronto, Faculty of Pharmacy



should be taught than instructing them in how to teach. By the time the School Act of 1871 was passed, making education compulsory for at least four months each year for seven-to-twelve year olds, the quality of teachers graduating from the Normal School was greatly improved.

Ryerson's dream of seeding the province with well-trained teachers was slowly paying off and the public now overwhelmingly accepted the value of free and universal education for its youth.

Ryerson wanted the St. James Square buildings to be the focal point for the development of the arts in Ontario and to this end he was successful in starting some of the most important cultural institutions in the province. For example, the Normal School's main building was home to the first publicly-funded museum in Canada. When his Museum of Natural History and Fine Arts opened in 1857, it contained many paintings, sculptures and artifacts that Ryerson had personally found and purchased in Europe.

After Confederation in 1867, the museum was renamed the Ontario Provincial Museum, which laid the foundation for the Royal Ontario Museum.

Activity in the field of art was by no means limited to collecting. The Ontario Society of Artists, founded in 1872 to train students in art, used the St. James Square buildings as its headquarters. In 1886, the group was incorporated as the Toronto School of Art, the forerunner of the Ontario College of Art.

Ryerson died in 1882, at the age of 79, but the work of the Normal School continued, essentially unchanged, until

the early years of this century when the Department of Education moved from St. James Square to Queen's Park and the museum was transferred to its new location at the Royal Ontario Museum.

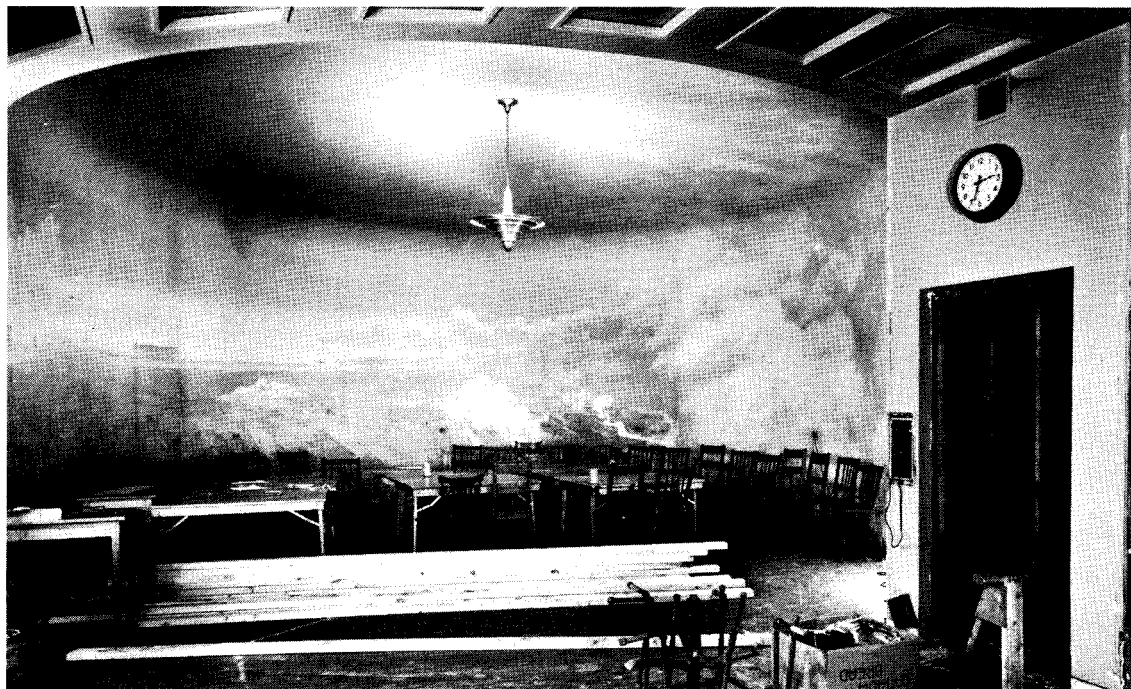
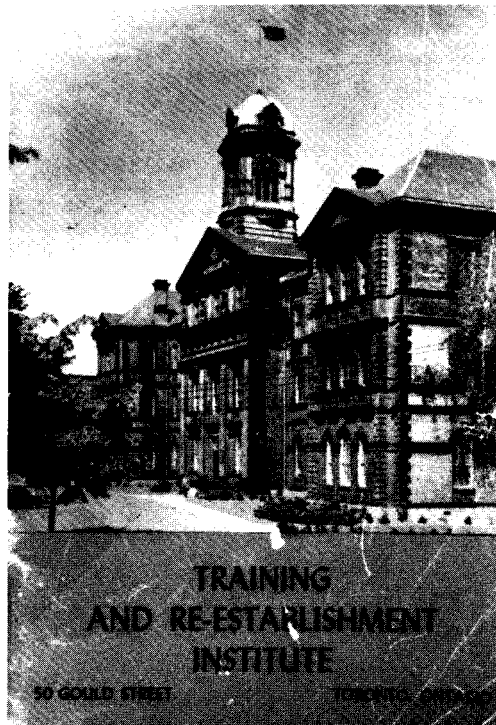
By 1920, when the art school moved to the new Ontario College of Art, the Normal School and the Model School were the sole inhabitants of the rambling Gothic and Roman style buildings on Gould Street.

When the war ended, the buildings on the square became the Training and Re-Establishment Institute, offering trades training to returning veterans from 1945 to 1948. This cover of the new Institute's calendar shows the Normal School with its third storey added.

Courtesy of Ryerson Polytechnical Institute Archives

During World War II, teacher education was shifted elsewhere and St. James Square became a Royal Canadian Air Force Initial Training Centre. The room pictured below, with its skyscape, was used for ground training for bomber pilots.

Courtesy of Ryerson Polytechnical Institute Archives



the War Years

Teacher training and practice continued to be the only occupation of the Normal School until 1941, when the demands of World War Two abruptly shifted the priorities of the country.

In July, 1941, the No. 6 Initial Training Centre for the Royal Canadian Air Force was established at the Normal School. Rooms and halls which had been used for teaching and study now served as drill halls, and dormitories and wooden, prefabricated auxiliary buildings were quickly erected around the grounds. As well, the Dominion-Provincial War Emergency Training Program, operated by the federal Department of Labour to provide trades training for armed services personnel and to prepare civilians for war-time industry, was run out of St. James Square.

To make way for the Training Centre, the Normal School was moved to the 17-room Earl Kitchener Public School on Pape Avenue, which later evolved into the Toronto Teachers' College. The Model School, which for nearly a century had been the flagship of Ontario's school system, was dissolved and its principal, students and teachers were transferred to schools in Toronto.

As the war drew to a close, the emphasis at St. James Square was shifting from military training to the rehabilitation of those who had served in the armed forces. In October of 1945, with the war ended, Ontario Premier George Drew officially opened the Training and Re-establishment Institute in the Normal and Model School buildings and the quonset huts and prefabricated buildings that remained from war-time use.

The Institute offered over 80 short, intensive courses mainly in trades such as woodworking, electronics and graphic arts and in commercial subjects. Over 16,500 students graduated from the Institute, despite the post-war conditions that severely restricted the availability of equipment and teaching personnel.

But rehabilitation of war veterans is a relatively short-term undertaking and steps were taken to wind up the program by 1948. While the post-war demands for short-term retraining were subsiding, the pressure from a booming economy for a more highly skilled and professional workforce was building. Thus it was that St. James Square entered a new chapter in its long history of educational service.

In 1948, St. James Square became the site of the Ryerson Institute of Technology, an experiment in technical education to meet the post-war skill needs of business and industry. At right is an invitation to the official opening.

Courtesy of Ryerson Polytechnical Institute Archives

St. James Square, looking north, in the early 1950s was still dominated by the Normal School, surrounded by the many mature linden trees which shaded the campus.

Courtesy of Ryerson Polytechnical Institute Archives

The Principal and Staff
of the
Ryerson Institute of Technology
request the pleasure of your company at the
Formal Opening
of the Institute on
Wednesday the twenty-second of September
one thousand nine hundred and forty-eight
at three o'clock

QUEST SPEAKER
THE HONOURABLE GEORGE A. OWEN, K.C.,
PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF EDUCATION

TEA WILL BE SERVED
AFTER THE CEREMONY



Ryerson Institute of Technology

It was 1948. A pair of army surplus pants cost \$1.25 and vegetable soup was eight cents a tin. Canada had won another Olympic hockey championship outscoring the opposition 69-5. An 11-room house near High Park cost \$25,000 and the population of Canada was fast approaching 13 million as the first cries of the coming baby boom could be heard in maternity wards across the land.

On historic St. James Square in downtown Toronto, another birth was taking place: the Ryerson Institute of Technology, more commonly known to staff and students alike as RIT. Appropriately, the school was named after Egerton Ryerson, whose name had been associated with the square for almost 100 years.

RIT officially opened on September 22, 1948, as a trade school with 250 students. According to one unflattering report of the day, Ryerson consisted of “a dirty, old, three-storey building (the Normal School) surrounded by asbestos-sided shacks” (the war-time buildings).

What it lacked in polish was more than compensated for by the enthusiasm of students and staff caught up in a new adventure. Media reports heralded the Ryerson Institute of Technology as the well-spring from which a new army of well-educated tradesmen would march into a promising future, providing the material goods and pleasures so craved by a war-fatigued population.

Fees were \$25 per year for Ontario residents and the programs offered included electronic technology, jewellery and watchmaking, business, architectural draughting, furniture design, commercial photography, fashion craft, food technology, graphic arts, machine tool technology, welding, cosmetology and barbering.

From the perspective of the 1980s, the list appears to reflect an age of almost primitive technological innocence. But these were the skills the society of 1948 required and, consistent with the Normal School's history and the present Ryerson, the school took its lead from the practical needs of the population. Over the years, as society's

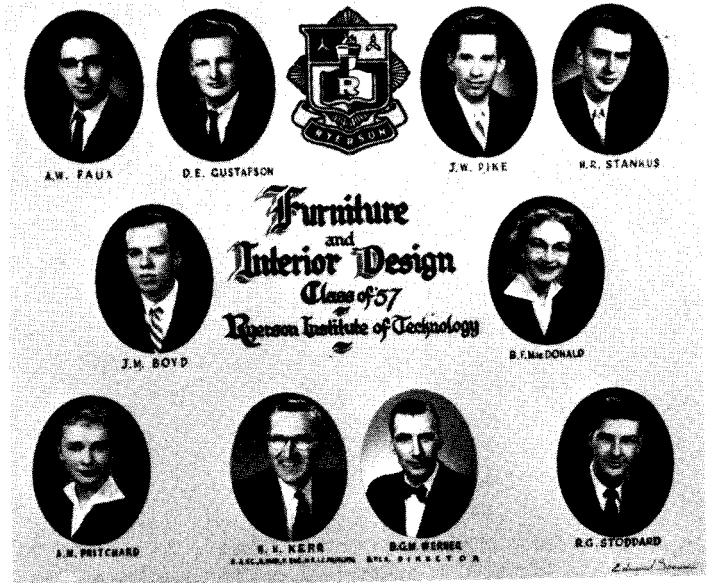


In the early years, student life at Ryerson revolved around studies, social events and sports, the latter including league championship teams in football, hockey and soccer. Here, players and student supporters arrive for a football game at Waterloo.

Courtesy of Ryerson Polytechnical Institute Archives

Graduating classes were small during Ryerson's first decade, as indicated by this F.I.D. class of 1957, and jobs were plentiful. Second from left in the bottom row, is Principal Howard H. Kerr, who guided the Institute through its first 18 years.

Courtesy of Ryerson Polytechnical Institute Archives



needs changed and technology advanced, so would Ryerson.

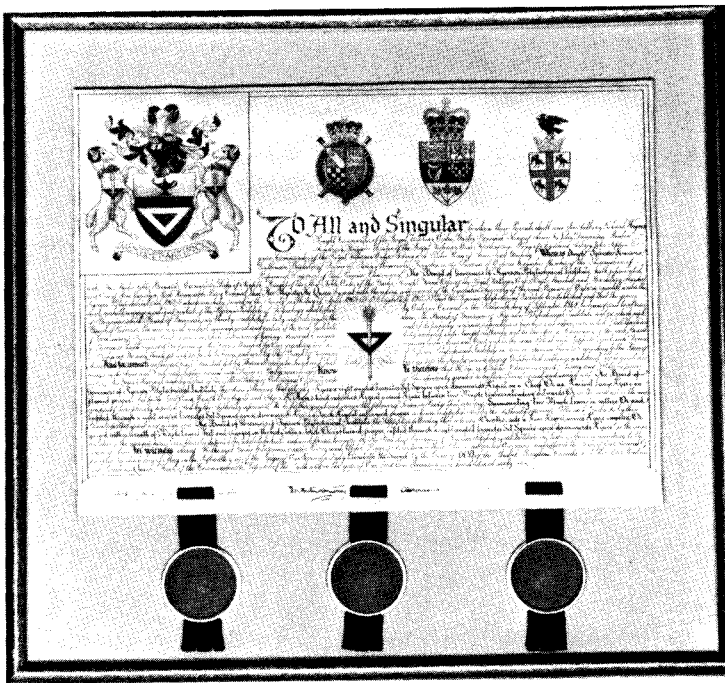
The man who presided over this new experiment, and who would continue doing so until 1966, was Principal Howard Kerr, who had been Ontario Regional Director for the Canadian Vocational Training Program which provided rehabilitation for war veterans, including those who attended the Training and Re-establishment Institute on St. James Square.

In the beginning, RIT's courses were designed to shorten the traditional apprenticeship period of six or seven years to two years: such were the urgent manpower needs of business and industry in the 1950s.

After surviving the first few years, RIT settled into a recognizable academic form, with a growing emphasis being placed on the humanities, and some programs being expanded to three years. By 1953, enrolment had jumped to 1,300 students who were, in part, attracted by the fact that the demand for Ryerson graduates exceeded the supply. On the social side, student life revolved then, as it does today, around sports and parties. The only problem, at least from the male students' point of view, was that men outnumbered women 9-1, but this imbalance was corrected by importing student nurses from nearby hospitals and residences for social activities. (Today, the balanced male/female enrolment at Ryerson is one sign of the changing times.)

By 1953 all the trades courses had been moved out of RIT to create the Provincial Institute of Trades, leaving behind a variety of mainly three-year programs leading to a diploma.

While Ryerson acknowledged the historic nature of the St. James Square site and the Normal and Model School buildings, it was obvious that the Institute would soon outgrow its inherited accommodation. For this reason, the old buildings were demolished between 1958 and 1963 - except for the Normal School facade which still stands - and replaced by the quadrangle building which forms the Kerr Hall portion of the modern Ryerson. With the new building, a growing faculty and student body, and programs that were aimed as much at developing management ability as skills training, Ryerson was poised for yet another change.



*Ryerson's original, hand-lettered charter, is displayed in the Board Room of the Institute today. It includes, upper left, the coat of arms and Ryerson's motto, **Mente et Artificio: With Mind and Hand.***

Ryerson's modern campus, including the quadrangle buildings (middle foreground), remains centred on St. James Square, which now stands in the midst of Toronto's downtown business district. The first new buildings were constructed on the square in 1958.



Ryerson Polytechnical Institute

The change came in 1964, when the provincial government voted to cut the ties that bound Ryerson to the Ministry of Education for policy development, the Public Works Department that oversaw Ryerson's buildings, and the Civil Service Commission that handled the school's staffing. In the future, Ryerson would be independent of government and headed by its own board of governors.

The proposal also included a name change to Ryerson Polytechnical Institute, after the terminology used in Britain to designate a school in which a multitude of technical and applied arts programs are taught. The committee that proposed the changes also suggested that Ryerson establish branch campuses throughout Metropolitan Toronto. This scheme was never adopted, although the concept would later evolve into the system of Applied Arts and Technology Colleges.

The 1960s represented a time of rapid expansion of the university

system in Ontario and Ryerson was included in that growth. A variety of schemes was proposed, including one that would see four 18-storey towers rise on the campus of a Ryerson multiversity. But eventually, when enrolment projections were carefully scrutinized, the plans were scaled down. It was a period of controversial property expropriations, demolition and construction. Ryerson was reaching out to cover some 18 acres (7.5 hectares) in what would eventually become 18 separate buildings.

To some students of the late 1960s, the saddest day came when the O'Keefe Brewery, at Victoria and Dundas Streets, was sold to Ryerson and the smell of boiling hops would never again drift into the classrooms of Kerr Hall. The brewery's office building was converted to Ryerson's Department of Business Administration and its warehouse became the Film and Photography Department.

Consistent with the social experimentation of the late 1960s, Ryerson's administration encouraged innovative teaching techniques and produced a



Ryerson's 34 career-oriented programs contain a balance of theory, hands-on experience and liberal arts so that graduates combine immediate employability with leadership potential. These students in Industrial Engineering, for example, work on a project to improve the efficiency of an industrial layout.



Ryerson's downtown campus was substantially enhanced in 1978 by the opening of the Ryerson Community Park, a \$3 million cooperative project which included public and private financing. The Bird of Spring, an Inuit sculpture in a fountain setting, is part of the park.

statement of philosophy that centred on the student and his learning experience—a combination of theory, hands-on experience and liberal arts studies—for the benefit and betterment of society.

By the early 1970s, most of the physical and academic groundwork of the modern Ryerson had been laid. This transition was capped in 1971 when the provincial government gave Ryerson the right to confer degrees on its graduates, an act that visibly distinguished Ryerson from the

community colleges and one which demonstrated that the rigor of its programs is comparable to that in traditional universities.

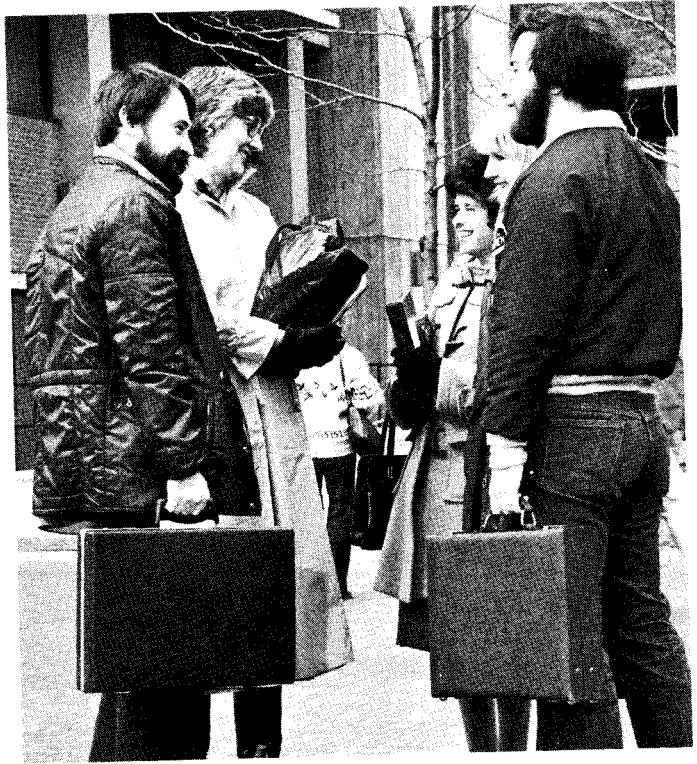
This photograph catches the rare appearance together of Ryerson's first three presidents, during a convocation ceremony in the early 1970s. President Donald Mordell (1969-74) congratulates a graduate while Dr. Howard Kerr (1948-1966) and Fred Jorgenson (1966-69) look on.

Courtesy of Ryerson Polytechnical Institute Archives



Continuing education students, on the way to class, pause to chat on the campus. Increased access to diploma and degree programs for part-time students is a priority in current academic planning at Ryerson.

A new microcomputer facility, pictured below, and a new academic computing centre that includes 300 terminals and a computer-aided design component, are among the array of modern equipment available to both full-time and part-time Ryerson students today.



Ryerson Today

This brief history of over 130 years of education on Egerton Ryerson's St. James Square brings us to the present and today's Ryerson Polytechnical Institute, a member of both the Council of Ontario Universities and the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. In statistical terms, Ryerson is a significant force in Ontario's post-secondary education system, with 10,000 day students and nearly 30,000 students attending evening classes. In addition, Ryerson reaches out to encompass senior citizens through tuition-free classes, professionals who are attracted to its management education programs, the applied research needs of business and industry through the Centre for Industrial Development, and to the nations of the Third World through the Ryerson International Development Centre.

Egerton Ryerson's dream was to populate the province with skilled and imaginative teachers who would instill in their students a legacy and love of learning. Today, the school named in his honor has carried his vision of an educated and productive society into the age of computers, exemplified in a

new Centre for Advanced Technology Education offering courses in integrated manufacturing systems, fibre optics and laser applications to both senior students and practising professionals. As well, computer-oriented courses have become an integral part of the Institute's curricula in many of its 35 diploma and degree programs. The site has changed dramatically since Egerton Ryerson first viewed it on that long-ago summer day, but the tradition of educational excellence on St. James Square continues well into its second century.

Acknowledgements

Ryerson gratefully acknowledges co-operation and support for this Ontario bicentennial project from the following:

The Secretary of State
Employment and Immigration
Canada
Carling O'Keefe Breweries of
Canada Limited
Ontario Teachers' Federation
Ontario College of Pharmacists

For Further Information

If you would like more information on the educational possibilities at Ryerson today, call or write:

Information Centre (Day and Continuing Education Programs)

(416) 979-5036.

Seniors' Studies (persons over 60)
979-5183

Open College/Ryerson 595-0485.

Ryerson Polytechnical Institute

350 Victoria Street

Toronto, Ontario M5B 2K3

Published September, 1984
Information Services
Ryerson Polytechnical Institute
Member: Council of Ontario Universities (C.O.U.)
Association of Commonwealth Universities (A.C.U.)



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