

# DEBEVOISE HALL at Vermont Law School

Campus Centerpiece: Renewed and Expanded



# DEBEVOISE HALL,

Vermont Law School's original home,  
has been renovated to include  
modern resource-saving technology  
while carefully preserving the  
integrity of the historic structure.



“ A lot of people working with historic preservation are doing adaptive reuse projects, but none of the buildings that I have seen or know of has done the job that Debevoise is doing in terms of bringing it up to modern energy standards. None. ”

— Marc Rosenbaum, Environmental Consultant



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND DEAN

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One of the most exciting aspects of the renovation of Debevoise Hall is that we have honored the strong connection that this building has had historically with the community and with Vermont Law School itself. It was the only building when the Law School was founded in 1972, and it now forms the central part of an internal “spine” that runs through all major buildings on campus. This not only physically connects the campus, but brings a sense of unity to our community.

We recently celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Environmental Law Center and it is fitting that Debevoise Hall is its new home. Having the VLS administration and the various components of the Environmental Law Center — the center, the ELC faculty, the Land Use Institute, the Institute for Energy and the Environment, and the Environmental and Natural Resources Clinic — gathered at the core of the campus is creating synergistic and enhanced intellectual and programmatic vitality.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Geoffrey B. Shields". The signature is fluid and cursive.

**Geoffrey B. Shields**  
President and Dean



*Built in 1893, Debevoise Hall was the town's first graded school and pioneered the legally mandated end of traditional, small district schools throughout Vermont*



*Associate Dean for Student Affairs and Diversity Shirley Jefferson '86, and Starla Yeh '07 in front of Debevoise Hall*

## CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY CENTERPIECE

**D**ebevoise Hall, a strikingly elegant structure built in 1893 as South Royalton's first centralized graded school, anchors the Vermont Law School campus. Its distinctive bell tower — eight tiny triangular dormers whimsically circle the roofline — can be seen from anywhere in the surrounding village and by travelers on the interstate. The building has long been a local landmark and symbol of education for the community and was Vermont Law School's original home. "Four generations of young scholars from the town and surrounding areas were summoned to their classes by the tower's bell," notes Professor and former President and Dean L. Kinvin Wroth, "... and its solid tones still signal the beginning and end of each class day and are heard on ceremonial occasions."

The Law School was forced to take a hard look at its revered "Old Classroom Building" after the completion in 1998 of James L. and Evelena S. Oakes Hall, which provided eight new, high-tech classrooms and a courtroom. The most practical and economical move might have been to tear down the old building and build a new one to consolidate faculty and administration offices at the campus core. Instead, under Dean Wroth's leadership, the school continued a commitment to preserving the quality of the surrounding village and environment by accepting a unique challenge: to adapt the deteriorating, historic landmark to take on new life as an environmentally sound "green building" at the center of the community and campus.

The \$6,500,000 renovation project blends historic preservation with modern, resource-saving technology. The restored twin doors in the



*L. Kinvin Wroth,  
Vermont Law School's  
Former President and Dean*



**TOP:** Charles Yates Common Room; **BOTTOM LEFT:** restored classroom; **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Debevoise Hall office.

arched entryway open onto a wainscoted hallway with two adjoining classrooms also carefully restored to evoke the feel of the school that first took in students more than a century ago. The traditional character of the 27,775 square foot, four-story structure has been preserved on the main floor, while the upper floors have been reorganized to provide administrative offices and a new home for the Law School's Environmental and Natural Resources Law Clinic. A new 7,250 square foot addition on the north side of the building contains the Charles Yates Common Room, an all-purpose space that project architect Rolf Kielman describes as "the Law School's living room," and a new home for the administration and faculty of the Law School's world-renowned Environmental Law Center. While the historic elements of the exterior of the building have been retained, cutting edge environmental building technologies first implemented in Oakes Hall have been incorporated inside to minimize the use of electricity, water, and fuel.

The Debevoise Hall project is the work of the Oakes Hall design and construction team — Truex Cullins & Partners Architects of Burlington, VT; award-winning environmental consultant Marc Rosenbaum of Meriden, NH; and construction manager H. P. Cummings Inc. of Woodsville, NH — assisted by historic preservation consultant Lyssa Papazian of Putney, VT.

## A COMPLEX CHALLENGE

Vermont Law School is seeking certification for Debevoise Hall under the U.S. Green Building Council's "Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design" (LEED) program, a nationwide initiative that recognizes efforts to minimize the environmental and energy use impacts of new construction and renovation. Only three Vermont projects have achieved certification.

"The thing about Debevoise that is most interesting," explains Marc Rosenbaum, "is trying to bring a historic building into 21st century performance both in terms of its use of energy use but also in terms of its 'environmental comfort' — health, visual and acoustic quality, and fresh air." Rosenbaum continues, "We've tried to do a job in this old building that would be creditable in a new building, recognizing the value of historic buildings in telling the story of a place. A lot of people working with historic preservation are doing adaptive reuse projects, but none of the buildings that I have seen or know of has done the job that Debevoise is doing in terms of bringing it up to modern environmental standards. None."

The existing frame, ornate shingles, and trim of the original Queen Anne-style building have been retained, but major structural renovation was required, and all three floors were reshored with steel beams and columns. "We did open-heart surgery," says Stephen Rooney, project manager for Truex Cullins & Partners, "and added modern mechanical systems the building was never intended to support." A sprinkler system was added, as was a new ventilating system, which uses five energy-recovering enthalpy wheels to maintain humidity and heat. High-performance fiberglass windows were installed inside the existing historic large, wood sash. Motion sensing lighting controls and energy-efficient fixtures throughout the building help to reduce energy consumption.

A combination of cellulose (a recycled newsprint product) and spray urethane foam was used to thoroughly insulate the building, and the final "envelope" was tested for air tightness room-by-room — theatrical fog was pumped in and the external walls checked for leakage. For years the entrance had been roped off in winter because of falling ice, but the roof is now air sealed and insulated to eliminate ice damming. The building now is so tight that construction supervisor Leet Ware says his winter crew worked in T-shirts in a structure heated with just eight space heaters.

The building is equipped with six composting toilets, which use microbial action to decompose waste. Similar toilets installed in Oakes Hall six years ago have required little maintenance and have dramatically reduced water use on campus. "I would say we are out

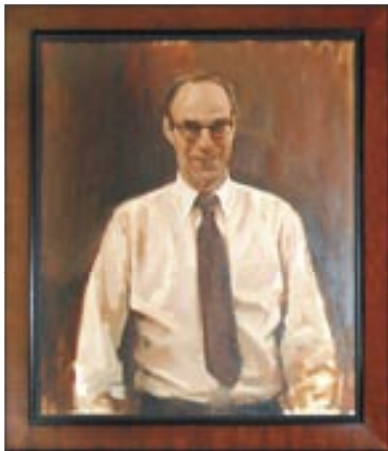
“ In the last seven years we have built a new building (James L. and Evelena S. Oakes Hall) and completed a major renovation of a historic building (Debevoise Hall) using exemplary environmental practices. We are now turning our attention to introducing good environmental practices to the whole gaggle of small residential buildings around our campus. ”

— Randy Foose, Vice President  
for Finance and Administration

in the forefront in terms of the use of composting toilets,” Rooney says. “These systems were originally developed for buildings not used year round, such as parks and buildings out in areas that couldn’t have conventional plumbing.” John Delemarre, Vermont Law School’s Director of the Physical Plant, notes that Dartmouth College and the University of Vermont are among the many local institutions that have expressed interest in the VLS systems. “In the long run we will save money — the price of town water goes up almost every year — and in the process have saved thousands of gallons of the town’s limited water supply.”

Other “green building” strategies involved the selection of building materials and finishes, and the salvage and recycling of construction waste. Wood certified as renewably harvested by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) was used whenever possible, and adhesives and finishes were carefully chosen to minimize harmful fumes. The Institution Recycling Network (IRN) of Concord, NH, a cooperative organization specializing in recycling construction and demolition wastes from building projects, identified more than 50 different materials that could be recycled as the building was being taken apart and reconstructed. Some items, like wainscot, doors, and trim were refinished and reused, or used as templates in creating new woodwork. Other salvageable items were removed before demolition and sold.

“I’ve never worked on a project where the attention to recycling was this detailed,” says Ware. Four separate dumpsters were onsite during the demolition stage to collect metal, plaster, painted wood, and clean wood scraps, and more than 80 percent of the construction debris was recycled.



*Thomas M. Debevoise*



*Ann T. Debevoise*

## NAMED IN HONOR OF FORMER DEAN

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The Old Classroom Building was renamed in honor of Thomas M. Debevoise, dean of Vermont Law School from 1974-82 and formerly president of the board of trustees. His wife, Ann, was a member of the board of trustees from 1996 until 2005.

Tom Debevoise, who died in 1995, had a distinguished career. He served as an assistant U.S. attorney, Attorney General of Vermont, and a lawyer for the Federal Power Commission (he was also a founding partner of the Washington firm of Debevoise and Liberman). Additionally, Debevoise was actively involved in the organized bar and in law revision programs and was a pioneer environmentalist before the environmental movement appeared on the American legal scene.

As dean, Debevoise led the Law School to many early milestones, including full approval by the American Bar Association in 1978, accreditation by the New England Association

of Schools and Colleges in 1980, and membership in the Association of American Law Schools in 1981. He launched VLS's South Royalton Legal Clinic and the Environmental Law Center, and established the *Vermont Law Review*. Other key efforts spearheaded by Dean Debevoise included the Law School's first major fundraising campaign, significant faculty appointments, and completion in 1975 of the Law School's first new building, the Founders Library (now the Jonathon B. Chase Community Center). Realizing the importance of uniting the VLS campus and its various buildings, he carefully supervised the construction of the stone wall that still defines the campus perimeter. It was also Debevoise's idea to place a working bell in the tower of the classroom building, to serve as a symbol of the Law School spirit of community and its fellowship with the town.

## HISTORIC COMMUNITY TREASURE

Vermont Law School's motto is "Law for the community and the world." The village of South Royalton, including the school, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and over the years the school has incorporated 18 village buildings into its campus — many over 75 years old. Indeed, the sense of being part of a quintessential New England village is a defining feature of the VLS experience.

Historic Preservation Consultant Lyssa Papazian worked with the architect, general contractor, and environmental consultant to develop a renovation strategy for Debevoise Hall that would preserve the unusual bell tower and decorative motifs on the front facades, restore the large transomed windows, and preserve the interior wainscot, wood floors, and dramatic first floor stair, hallway, and lower classrooms. Portions of the original black plaster chalkboard have been preserved under plexiglass. The team also worked to create a seamless transition from the restored areas and the more modern sections on the upper floors and new addition. "Both preservation and change are consistent with the history of the building," notes Papazian. "Important, continued use will be the key to this building's true preservation — it was built to be the center of the school system and has been that to three institutions."

Designed by Montpelier architect George Guernsey and opened in 1893, the building was the town's first graded school and pioneered the legally mandated end of traditional, small district schools throughout Vermont. Then in 1951 the town built a new high school, and in 1964 added an elementary wing. By 1964, the empty and deteriorating old school was included in a photo essay on "vanishing American landmarks." Anthony Doria purchased the building in 1965 and established Royalton College, to which in 1972 he added his newly founded Vermont Law School. "I'm so glad the Law School saved it — no one else would have," says John Dumville, a Royalton selectman and historic sites operations chief for the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation.

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— Lyssa Papazian  
Historic Preservation Consultant



*Lyssa Papazian, Historic Preservation Consultant*

Dumville attended the elementary school and remembers the restored classrooms as welcoming, bright, and full of light. And he remembers signing up at recess to ring the bell. “It was a great honor to be able to pull the chain — to ring the bell so kids and the village would know when school started, and at noon and recess.”

Dick Ellis, director of the Royalton Town Band and former selectman, also remembers the bell. “It rang exactly three minutes before classes — I could just make it from my house to my seat in class in three minutes. Sometimes us boys would sneak up into the tower and just look out over the valley.” Ellis’s mother graduated from the school in 1910, and his wife’s sister used to teach in one of the restored classrooms. “They’ve done a good job,” he said after touring the classroom. “It looks just the way it did then.”

Dean Wroth points out that two generations of Vermont Law School graduates who succeeded these Royalton youths have equally fond memories of their years in the Old Classroom Building and played a significant part in planning the renovation. “Law students, too, climbed to the top of the bell tower,” he notes. “As graduates, they warmly remember every squeak in the stairs and scar on the wainscoting, as well as the moments of fearful enlightenment that they experienced at the feet of the master teachers whom Tom Debevoise assembled in the old building for their instruction.”



*Rolf Kielman, principal,  
Truex Cullins &  
Partners, Architects*

Debevoise Hall once again became a living part of its community even as it was being renovated. Nearly 300 people worked on the project, most of them local Vermonters. Architect Rolf Kielman collaborated with the Guild of Vermont Furniture Makers to design furniture — all made with FSC certified wood from New England — with the simple, clean lines of earlier times. Eight members of the guild made the furniture — the furniture for the president and dean’s office was made right in the village of South Royalton. A small Vermont weaving shop made hand-woven rugs from all-natural wool. “We have a wealth of incredible craftsmen in this state, and to utilize and have them participate in a project like this is completely in harmony with what the Law School is trying to do,” Kielman said. “It is a credit to the school that it was willing to embark on this arduous and time-consuming process.”

## DEBEVOISE HALL RESOURCE-SAVING TECHNOLOGY

### “Super Windows” Reduce Heat Loss, Retain Historic Exterior Windows

- Super insulating fiberglass windows inserted inside existing historic wooden windows insulate almost twice as well as typical new windows, dramatically reducing heat loss while retaining the look of the historic Queen Anne-style schoolhouse.

### Composting Toilets Save Precious Water

- Composting toilets, which do not require any water, are on first two floors of Debevoise Hall; “foam flush,” a mixture of biocompatible soap and water, carries waste from the third floor to the basement composting system. The reduced water demand is a substantial benefit to the Town of Royalton’s small municipal water system.

# UNITED VISION, SOUND ARCHITECTURAL PLANNING

Debevoise Hall is one of three major building projects (Julien and Virginia Cornell Library was completed in 1991, and James L. and Evelena S. Oakes Hall was constructed in 1998) that create a sense of unity and a physical connection for the Law School campus. These linked buildings allow students and faculty to remain indoors during winter months. “Most law schools are built vertically,” says Vice President for Finance and Administration Randy Foose. “We’ve essentially done the same thing but horizontally.”

Anticipating growth, the school created a facilities master plan in 1995 to coordinate future campus development, conducting site surveys, analysis, and extensive interviews with faculty, staff, and students. A new classroom building and renovation of the Old Classroom Building were principal components of that plan. After the completion of Oakes Hall in 1998, the plan was updated, and the lengthy planning and design process that led to the Debevoise Hall renovation took center stage. Foose says the big question raised by this project was how to continue the school’s commitment to good environmental construction and design while honoring the building’s historical significance in the community.

Use of the Oakes Hall project team and preservation consultant Papazian helped to make that blend possible. “The thing that is great about the Law School is the depth of commitment the institution has,” says Rosenbaum, the team’s environmental consultant. “There’s this united vision across the institution: ‘this is important for what the Law School is and wants to continue to be.’ I find this in small, environmental, nonprofit organizations, but it is unusual in an institution of higher learning, where there are so many conflicting needs and opinions.”

This “united vision” is now being cast onto future projects, Foose says. “In the last seven years we have built a new building (James L. and Evelena S. Oakes Hall) and completed a major renovation of a historic building (Debevoise Hall) using exemplary environmental practices. We are now turning our attention to introducing good environmental practices to the whole gaggle of small residential buildings around our campus.” Some of the possible improvements being discussed are “green” lighting technologies, photovoltaics, and the use of biodiesel fuel. With such innovations, Vermont Law School and its unique campus will continue to be an important link between the past and the future.



*Randy Foose, VLS Vice  
President for Finance and  
Administration*

## Enthalpic Energy Recovery Wheels Control Humidity, Recycle Exhaust Heat

- Five enthalpic wheels, located within the ventilation air ductwork, are coated with a substance that absorbs and re-releases moisture. By transferring heat and water vapor the wheels keep the building from becoming too dry in the winter or too humid in the summer.
- The wheels recover 80% of the heat in exhaust air, transferring it to the incoming fresh air.

## Sustainably Harvested Wood

- Wood certified as sustainably harvested was used in construction whenever possible.
- Architect Rolf Kielman collaborated with the Guild of Vermont Furniture Makers to design furniture — all made with Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified wood — with the simple, clean lines of earlier times.

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## PROJECT DATA

<b>CONSTRUCTION BUDGET:</b>	\$6,500,000
<b>SQUARE FOOTAGE:</b>	27,775
<b>NUMBER OF FLOORS:</b>	4
<b>DEDICATED:</b>	May 20, 2005

**ARCHITECT:** Truex Cullins & Partners Architects

**ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANT:** Marc Rosenbaum, Energysmiths

**HISTORIC PRESERVATIONS CONSULTANT:** Lyssa Papazian

**CONSTRUCTION MANAGER:** H.P. Cummings Inc.

**RECYCLING:** Institution Recycling Network (IRN)

**STRUCTURAL ENGINEER:** Engineering Ventures, Inc.

**MECHANICAL AND PLUMBING ENGINEER:** Kohler & Lewis

**ELECTRICAL ENGINEER:** Hallam Associates

**LIGHTING DESIGN:** J & M Lighting Design

### CONTRIBUTING VERMONT ARTISANS

Beaver Meadow Handwoven Products  
Beeken Parsons

Richard Bissell Fine Woodworking

Breznick Woodworking

Brookside Woodworking

Clarner Woodworks

Freight House Woodworks

Holman Studios

William Laberge Cabinetmaker

L.S. Larsen Studios

Charles Shackleton Furniture

New Wing Designs

Sherry Senior Designs and Stenciling

Wilson Woodworking

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## VERMONT LAW SCHOOL



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