The Ellis Building was named in honour of the former Head of the Department of Soil Science, J.H. Ellis. Ellis was a former student of the Manitoba Agricultural College who was best known for mapping and classifying Manitoba soils. This enormous project proved quite beneficial during the drought of the 1930s in order to develop an adequate farm rehabilitation plan. The survey was only intended to be an interim tool to be used until a more scientific classification could be developed but it actually became the basis for soil classification in Canada. Ellis also wrote innovative crop rotation and fertilizer studies that served as the basis for soil management programs on many Canadian farms.