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# *The Griffin*

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## **The Grand Old Lady of Gottingen Street—Who is She?**

*by Eileen Riley*

An imposing residence with “Victoria Hall” inscribed above the front door stands on the west side of Gottingen Street. Although it has been there for 125 years, many Haligonians are unaware of its history and function. In order to appreciate the size and location of this structure and to fully understand its role in Halifax society we must step back in time and consider some aspects of life in the 1800s.

For the poor, the ill, the physically and mentally handicapped and the destitute, life was hard. Without the intervention of philanthropists many would have died in squalour and despair. Halifax was fortunate in

having many generous citizens who supported several institutions for the needy. One group, however, was largely ignored until in 1860 Isabella Cogswell, Charlotte Lawson and Jane Liddell became aware that there was a desperate need to provide support for women who could no longer sustain their accustomed level of living. These were middle-class women whose husbands had died without providing for them, or women who were too old to continue working and had not earned enough to accumulate any savings, or single women with no family to provide them with bed and

*Continued overleaf*

*Victoria Hall, a 1996 pen and ink drawing by Andrea Ward.*



**Hall:** *Continued from page 1*

board in their old age.

The three women approached William Murdoch, a wealthy merchant, for financial backing for their proposed endeavour. He offered them \$4,000 on condition that a similar sum be raised by those interested in the building of a home for aged women. A meeting was held on March 23, 1860 at the home of Isabella Binney Cogswell, where a group of concerned men and women decided to accept Mr. Murdoch's generous offer, collect funds, secure a house and open a "Home for the Aged".

Trustees were appointed to manage the funds and a committee was established to oversee the running of the home. Dr. Daniel McNeill Parker, Charles Murdoch, brother of William, and Edward Binney were appointed the first trustees. Thirty-five women of the town formed the Committee of Management. Their names are synonymous with the history of Halifax. Among them were Mrs. William Cunard, Mrs. George Starr, Mrs. James Sweet, Mrs. Robert Uniacke and Miss Isabella Cogswell. Thirteen weeks later, June 26, 1860, the home was opened in a rented house on Gottingen St. and six ladies moved in. The house proved to be too small to accommodate the number of applicants and in 1862, the Committee purchased the present property, which belonged to Senator Roach, for \$3,200 and built an extension onto the house. In March 1863 it was ready for occupancy and 24 women were welcomed through its doors.

In 1880 the Committee purchased the property at the rear of the Home for \$950. Once again there was a great demand for admission to the Home and there was a long waiting list. It was decided that a new building was required. In 1884 the main house was razed, leaving only the recently-built extension. The problem of where to house the residents and staff while the construction was taking place was solved by William Cunard's

generous offer of the rent-free use of his large and commodious premises on Brunswick Street. One of the leading architects of Nova Scotia, Henry Frederick Busch, was chosen to design the new house with the instruction to make it, "plain, but neat and substantial." Irene Fennell, in a description of Victoria Hall written in 1988 for the city of Halifax, called it "a superb example of the Second Empire with a central cupola and flamboyant roofscape with dormers. [It is a] two and a half storey wooden structure with a mansard roof." The contract for building was awarded to J. F. Corstan; sub-contractors were Sam Marshall for plastering, Longard Bros. for heating, T. Walsh and Co. for painting, W. Muirhead for plumbing and A. Kaiser for gas fittings.

On July 2, 1884, Lieutenant Governor Matthew H. Richey, Q.C. laid the cornerstone for the new home and on January 15, 1885 it was officially opened by the mayor, James MacIntosh, with the premier, Rt. Hon. W. S. Fielding, and distinguished guests in attendance. The residents moved in one week later. In 1906, the name of the Home was changed to "The Old Ladies' Home" and then in 1970 it became "Victoria Hall". In 1914, an extension was built on the south side of the building in order to accommodate at least half of the ladies on the waiting list. The architect in charge of this work was Sydney Perry Dumaresq, who was the son of James Charles Dumaresq, another very well known Halifax architect.

During the Explosion, the building remained intact, although the windows were shattered, causing extensive damage inside. The residents found temporary shelter in the basement of Fort Massey church and then moved to the Jost Mission. A year would pass before they were able to return home.

During wars, the Depression and economic fluctuations, the

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## *The Griffin*

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Submissions are welcomed.  
Deadline for the next issue:  
**April 17, 2009**

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## Deregistration of Dimock House *by Wendy Elliott*

The oldest home in Perea will probably collapse under the weight of the winter snow this year. Recently the government began to deregister the Dimock house. The structural integrity of the old home is deteriorating and the building has begun to collapse. Phyllis Dimock said last week that the fireplace that was holding the roof up is disintegrating.

Twenty years ago people used to tell Ron Dimock to bulldoze the old family home down, but he was passionate about determining

if the house predated the expulsion of 1755. His last uncle born in the home just died this spring [2008], but even he couldn't say how old it was. The house was never plumbed, had 30-amp wiring, moss and birchbark insulation and was constructed without nails.

The owners would love to have the massive vertical plank walls carbon dated. [The boards are about 18 inches wide and about 3 and one half inches thick.] Any number of experts have looked at the house, but nobody

was willing to go out on a limb about its age. One St. Mary's University archeologist even drove up to northern New Brunswick to confirm the fireplace arm that Ron ploughed up was in the French style. Others uncovered a cobblestone floor in the basement and French-style drains. The family found a

number of artifacts by accident around the house and archeologists located an old button and a clay pipe.

"They told us it's all Acadian in style," said Phyllis. "We feel bad. It bothers us. It's a shame. Ron looked at a variety of alternatives, even lifting it by crane." In the end, the Dimocks could not afford to stabilize the little building, which is on the same property as their own home, but they carefully mow the grass around it each summer. The house is uninsurable and trespassers have been an occasional problem.

Recently Heritage Minister Bill Dooks decided to approve the request for deregistration based on the advice of his advisory council. "This is a very rare action," said heritage spokesman Michael Noonan. "I believe there have only been seven such requests under the act to this date."

A staff review indicated that the structure had been extensively researched and documented. It was registered in 1987. Noonan



Construction details are exposed in 2009. (Peter Delefos)

**Hall:** *Continued from page 2*

Hall has continued to provide a comfortable home for senior women. Currently 37 residents, ranging in age from 70 to 100, enjoy the many activities offered. They play bridge and cribbage, watch movies every night, attend Elderobics, join the knitting group, listen to stories being read, play bingo, attend church services, have a glass of wine at the birthday reception, join in the sing-songs, stroll in the garden and enjoy the annual tea party.

The style of governance established in 1860 has never changed. The Board of Trustees, now six in number, continues to oversee the investment of the endowment fund. The chairman is Dan Campbell, Q.C., senior partner at Cox Palmer. The Committee of Management, sixteen in number,

sets policy, establishes the annual budget, authorizes major expenditures and, with the administrator, is responsible for arranging social, physical and spiritual activities and opportunities for the residents. All trustees and committee members are volunteers.

*Victoria Hall, A history 1860-2000, a more detailed history of the Hall and the people who have sustained it over the years, may be purchased from the administrator, Donna Merriam, 422-3969. To obtain current information please consult the web-site, [www.victoriahall.ca](http://www.victoriahall.ca).* ☺



If members of the Heritage Trust would like to visit the Hall for *Tea and a Tour* in June, the Committee would be delighted to welcome them.



**Dimock:** *Continued from page 3*

noted the records are public documents that can be accessed at any time. "Given the condition of the building it was no longer considered appropriate for registration."

Deregistration of properties is carried out in accordance with the Heritage Property Act and coordinated through the Heritage Property Program.

*This article originally appeared in the "Kentville Advertiser" with a file photo from 1987. Peter Delefes and Kevin Ball visited the site recently to photograph the building; they remarked on the Roman numeral XIII carved into one of the vertical timbers. Alan Ruffman and a colleague took a wood sample from the house some years ago for dendrochronological dating, but additional work would be required to derive a reliable age. The white pine, hemlock and spruce dendrochronologies they were constructing at the time did not extend to the Annapolis Valley.* ☺

## **AGORA-L, a Discussion List Hosted by the Heritage Canada Foundation** *by Graeme F. Duffus, NSAA*

In January 2008, the Heritage Canada Foundation launched an email-based discussion list that provided the opportunity to ask questions and receive answers, advice, or leads from members of the List. Since then, questions have been posted and are often responded to from a diverse group of members, usually within 24 hours. The topics are quite varied but usually involve heritage buildings, from advice for restoring components to designation and planning issues. There seem to be many planning officials as members and I have seen responses from numerous jurisdictions across the country. They provide considerable information on how they do it or how they handle issues, such as de-registration requests, exterior modification, districts, etc. Many conservation architects have also responded. One can also find tradespeople to do work or advise on best

practices on topics such as windows and stonework. Workshops are sometimes advertised or offered. One example of a question posted by Natalie Bull was: "Seeking examples of good new development in heritage districts." So it is a List that allows any member, with any kind of question related to Heritage, to get multiple answers or to generate a good discussion. Because it is hosted and monitored by Heritage Canada, every question and response is reviewed by their administrator before it is posted. The following directions on how to join are from the Heritage Canada Foundation.

### **How do I join AGORA-L?**

To join *AGORA-L*, you simply email ([agora-l@heritagecanada.org](mailto:agora-l@heritagecanada.org)) the first message you wish to share. You will be sent a validation email to confirm your request to join. ☺

## **Membership**

When you renew your membership for the January-December 2009 period, please consider adding a donation to your cheque to help support the Trust's work. Our outreach activities over the past year have included free weekly walking tours in Halifax from Spring to late Fall. These have been received enthusiastically by residents and visitors from around the world. Classroom talks and heritage awards have taken the Trust into the schools, another valuable contribution to building public awareness of our heritage. As costs for postage and printing rise, it is a growing challenge to cover the cost of producing and distributing *The Griffin* to members throughout the province. Your donations will assist these varied educational activities. Thank you. Tax receipts will be issued for all donations. ☺

# Adaptive Re-use: Keeping Historic Places Alive

## Collins Bank, 1869 Upper Water Street *by Peter Delefes*

### *Editor's Note:*

*This is the first in a series of articles that will look at some successful adaptive re-use projects involving historic commercial buildings in downtown Halifax. We begin the series with a visit to Film Nova Scotia, located in Historic Properties, on the third floor of the Collins Bank Building, Upper Water Street. The Griffin's Peter Delefes met with the President and CEO of Film Nova Scotia, Ann MacKenzie, in her office at the Collins Bank Building, to prepare the article which follows.*

The Collins Bank Building is a municipally and provincially registered heritage building and is part of the nationally recognized Historic Properties. The sturdy, ironstone building was erected in 1825 by Enos Collins to house the operations of the Halifax Banking Company of which he was a partner. The banking company occupied the western portion of the building fronting on Upper Water Street. The eastern half of the building housed various importing and trading firms. In her book *Georgian Halifax*, Elizabeth Pacey explains that, except for the word "BANK" carved in the sandstone lintel above the Upper Water St. entrance, there are few indicators that the front part of the building once served as a bank. The purpose was indistinguishable from the storage facilities in the back half of the structure. She indicates that banks did not begin to emerge as a recognizable building type until 1840.

Film Nova Scotia, a Provincial Crown Corporation established in 1990 to grow the NS film industry, is one of the top film production centres in Canada. The film industry is an important contributor to the economy of Nova Scotia, generating over \$100 million annually, over the last decade, and employing over 2000 Nova Scotians

across a broad range of professions, while supporting a variety of local businesses.

Film Nova Scotia leases 3200 square feet of office space on the third floor of the Collins Bank Building. On entering their office it is immediately apparent that historic and contemporary elements have been integrated to provide a warm and pleasing atmosphere. Opposite the receptionist's desk there is a large exposed original 18 inch square timber beam and a supporting post. On either side of the post hang bright promotional posters advertising films, television series and other media for which Film Nova Scotia has provided financial assistance.

Seated behind the desk in her office, which has an outer wall of original, exposed brick and stone work, Ann MacKenzie mentions that the corporation moved into its current premises in June 2008, and that it looked at fifteen buildings, some as far afield as Burnside, before deciding on the Collins Bank location. The crown



*The Collins Bank Building, Upper Water Street, Halifax.*

corporation had previously occupied space at 1724 Granville Street, in the historic Acadian Recorder Building, across from Province House. They wanted to remain in an historic building but were in need of more space to accommodate additional staff members and an increasing array of marketing materials. Ms. MacKenzie says that she and her staff love the location and the building, which suits the image of

*Continued on page 6*



*President and CEO Ann MacKenzie, of Film Nova Scotia, in the reception area, Collins Bank Building.*

**Reuse:** *Continued from page 5*

itself that Film Nova Scotia is seeking to promote, as a vibrant cultural industry. She adds that her clients also appreciate the space. When asked if she has ever worked in a newer, high rise building, she replies that she has and while modern buildings usually have more space available, they are also more "institutional". She states that the Collins Bank Building has a lot more character and is more fun to be in than a new office building. She indicates that there are some minor annoyances associated with being in an older building. For one thing, they are still in need of storage space; this is apparent from the number of boxes piled on top of one another in several of the rooms. There are also some technical glitches associated with wiring in the building. Recently, the computer system throughout the building was down for an entire day and the floors are so uneven in some rooms that the casters had to be removed from the chairs to keep them from sliding about. She hastens to add that they are petty annoyances and once you figure out what the problem is, you get used to it. Besides, the look and the feel of the building more than compensate.

On a brief tour of the office one notices, throughout the space, the historic ambience of the exposed timbers and stones, offset by the carefully chosen palette of contemporary colours (pastel sage, robin's egg blue, sunflower and pebble sand). Added to this are the large graphic posters and the office furniture, which pick up and accent the hues in the historic elements.

In the hospitality area of the office, the 'floating' shelves take advantage of the stone backdrop. The minimalist design of the shelves exposes more of the stonework to view. The Boardroom retains the characteristically small six over six paned windows typical of the upper storeys of Georgian buildings. The suede wall colours and the

# Heritage Tourism in Yarmouth

The speaker at the annual dinner of Heritage Trust was Michael Tavares, an American who came to Yarmouth in 1998 and proceeded to take an active part in the preservation and creative re-use of heritage properties in the area. His restored buildings have received multiple awards.

He outlined his philosophy for his work in this field, which he said needed a vision of what was to be achieved, an understanding of the economic implications of the enterprise, realism in abandoning projects that were not viable, and a willingness to take calculated risks in creating an attraction that will draw tourists and other clients.

His first Yarmouth project was the Charles C. Richards house. Charles Richards, the proprietor of Minard's Liniment, brought the brick, brownstone and granite from New England. After two more owners, and a period of neglect during the Depression, it was used for military purposes during

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custom stained table accent the montage of brick and stone in the wall.

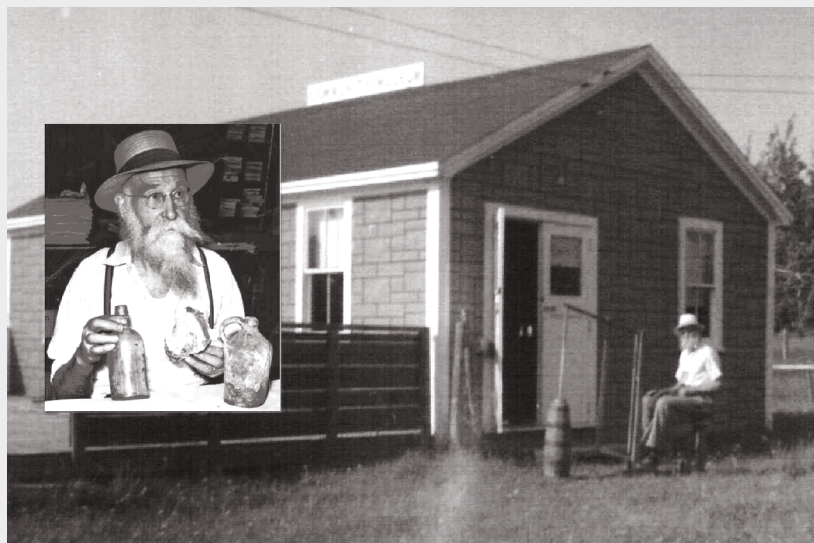
The ten staff members of Film Nova Scotia are all young professionals - lawyers, accountants and marketing people. Most of them live downtown and enjoy the proximity of their workplace to their homes. The office has frequent visitors associated with film, TV and media production, some of whom work in the office for extended periods of time. It is easy to imagine how people working in this creative industry would find the atmosphere of the building pleasing. The historic materials and infrastructure combined with the pastel colours and the decorative elements all come together to create a feeling of synchronicity and surprise - just what the creative community is looking for. ☺

World War II. It then served first as a public library and then as an apartment building before being condemned in the 1980s. Tavares rescued it and restored it as a historic bed-and-breakfast, receiving the Nova Scotia Home Association award for restoration of the year, 2001. He showed pictures of its restoration for which he brought in skilled craftsmen to return it to its turn of the century design with décor from the 1930s.

In the same block of the Yarmouth Conservation District stood the MacKinnon-Cann house, a "sister house" (semi-detached) built by Zebina Goudey for his son and daughter in 1887. It stayed in the family for 80 years before becoming an apartment building in the 1970s. Later it became derelict and a fire hazard, and was almost bulldozed by the town, but Tavares was able to save it nine years ago and spent 3½ years restoring it. His plan was to turn it into an inn, while the town wanted it to remain residential; he was able to win them over with a viable plan which was finally approved. He gutted the interior down to the laths, and created a restaurant in the former ballroom, with a splendid parquet floor and a chandelier that reflect the elegance of the 1880s, and a breakfast room that doubles as a meeting room. Each bedroom is decorated differently, reflecting different periods of the house's history. Now known as the MacKinnon-Cann Inn, it is the largest and most impressive of Tavares' restorations. It has been a commercial success, with a popular restaurant, a year-round business, and 85-90% occupancy consisting of both business clients and tourists. The inn is the recipient of the Provincial Heritage Property Owners' Association L.B. Jenson Award, the Yarmouth County Historical Society Award and the Crystal Award of Excellence for Business of the

*Continued on page 12*

# The Little Museum that Could: Parkdale–Maplewood Community Museum, Lunenburg County *by Donna M. Smith*



*Thomas I. Spidle and Avard Foster's barn where Spidle, known as Uncle Tom, kept a collection that became the basis of the Parkdale-Maplewood Community Museum.*

When Thomas I. ("Uncle Tom") Spidle II set up his collection of old and interesting things in Avard Foster's retired barn on the newly-opened Community Fair Grounds in 1950, he probably never dreamed that his little "museum" would one day grow to be one of the best community museums in the province.

In 1953 he raised \$300 and persuaded the community to build a 12'x20' metal-sided building on the Fair Grounds to house his collection. When Uncle Tom died in 1963, he left his collection to "the people of Parkdale-Maplewood" and his niece and nephew, Muriel and Lloyd Wentzel, took on the care of the collection. In 1957 the Maccabee Lodge Hall, originally located down the road in Maplewood, was moved onto the site to be used as a dining room (the old house and barn on the Fair Grounds had been torn down). The Museum quickly took over the Maccabee Hall and filled it with artifacts.

In 1980 the Museum Society was registered as a Charity and an  
*March 2009*

official Society was formed with Lloyd Wentzel as Chairman and Muriel as Curator. As artifacts continued to pour in, the drawbacks to unheated, uninsulated buildings became apparent. Once more the Wentzels and the Board of Directors went to work - holding suppers, selling tickets and borrowing money. A plain but functional hall, attached to the old Maccabee building, was opened in 1984. It had insulation, a furnace and yes, even a dehumidifier for use in the summer. The Nova Scotia Museum donated some furnishings, a local carpenter built some basic display "kiosks" and the most perishable items in the collection were moved into the new "digs".

Once the building was open, Muriel Wentzel announced her retirement. This writer was new to the Community and had attended a few meetings of the Museum Society. Totally lacking in qualifications and not knowing any better, she accepted the job of Curator. Her first priority was to find a Secretary-Treasurer, as both

positions were vacant - and she didn't want them! A real treasure in the person of Wendy Looke, then a new mother and business genius, was persuaded to take the job. She remains the financial and organizational rock on which today's Museum stands.

The first "Heidelbeerfest" was held in 1985, serving a selection of local "German" dishes, buffet style. Attendance at what is now called "The Heritage Blueberry Festival" has grown from less than 150 to between 500 and 700.

Inspired by the acquisition of a 4'x4' folk art carving of a "sap camp" created by local wood carver Willie Mansfield in 1989, we began collecting artifacts from living artisans. These now include basketry, paintings, bird carvings, knitting, hooked mats and quilting. The artifacts are exhibited with a photo and short biography of the creator.

In the early 1990s we began publishing a Newsletter for our membership several times a year as well as keeping our "news" in the public eye through the "Friends and Neighbours" column of the local weekly papers. The revamping of the provincial Community Museums Assistance Program in 1995 brought a welcome increase in our operating grant and an on-site Curator was hired in 1996. Donna Smith took the title of Administrator, leaving the care of the collection and daily museum operations in the highly capable hands of Barbara Veinot (now Wentzell). A permanent part-time Museum Assistant was hired in 2000.

Around 2001 we began to plan for an expansion. An application for ACOA funding was submitted in 2003 - co-incidentally our 50th anniversary - without great hopes of success. When, in the spring of 2004, we received approval of our

*Continued on page 10*

# Time Frame—McCully Collection: Aerial Photographs of N



Often important pieces of our past are saved not by foresight and good planning but by the luck of happenstance. Such was the case in the saving of the Richard McCully Aerial Photographic Collection and such was my luck in being part of that salvage.

My part in this story began one afternoon in 1985, when I got a call from fellow history buff, Harold Lister of Moncton, N.B. He was then attending an estate auction and noticed a number of dusty boxes of glass plates as part of the inventory. Knowing my interest in historical photography, he asked if I wanted to bid on them. Although it was rather like buying "a pig in a poke" I answered, "Yes," without hesitation and quoted a top bid price, higher than my bank account at the time. The bid was made and accepted and I became owner of

one of the most remarkable and historically important aerial image collections of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Some months later, after carefully cleaning, cataloguing and making contact negatives, plus numerous prints of the collection, I became even more aware of the historical treasure that I had. Since my history interests were principally with things Nova Scotian, I decided to inquire of the New Brunswick Archives' possible interest in these plates. They were very interested. I decided they could give the New Brunswick plates a more secure home and put them to better use than I. Therefore, I sold them that part of the collection at a very reasonable price.

In 2005, Dan Soucoup, with the cooperation of the New Brunswick Archives, published McCully's *New Brunswick...*

*Historic Aerial Photographs, 1931-1939.* The following paragraph, from his Introduction to the book, well describes the historic value and visual magic of these aerial images.

*For the photographic collector, historian, or anyone interested in understanding what life was like in the early years of the twentieth century, the collection is absolutely unique: it captures in intimate detail the genuine, the day-in-the-life, you-saw-it-with-your-own-eyes feeling of that first day in May 1931 when Harold Reid and Marty Fraser took off in Dick McCully's small twin-engined plane from the old Moncton airport and began clicking away at many of the most important sights over Moncton, Westmorland County, and beyond.*

The 'beyond' part was in Nova Scotia, where in July and August

of that year over two hundred images were also taken. Unfortunately for us today, not all parts of the province were covered, nor could they be in 1931.

Although establishment of commercial aviation in the Maritime Provinces had come a long way by 1931, expansion was also being hampered somewhat by the effects of the Great Depression. At that time, Richard "Dick" McCully, was a pilot and flying instructor at the Moncton Airport. He had also just purchased a small twin-engined aircraft and was looking for ways to pay for it. Reportedly a born salesman and promoter, he approached his friend, photogra-

pher Harold Reid. Harold had both an artist's eye and a high definition WW I aerial surveillance camera. Thus the scheme was hatched to fly the radial (fuel dependent) extents of the Moncton and Halifax airdromes and selectively take photos of the most prosperous farms, factories, public buildings and community centres. Then, with prints in hand, they could peddle copies to hundreds of proud property owners. The idea was a good one but the timing was bad. Also bad were some of the logistics and costs of the venture. They did manage to sell quite a number of prints but certainly not enough to cover all their expenses. Yet, by the happenstance of adventurous vision-

aries like Richard McCully, his dry basement and various lucky pack-rats along the way, much of his work was saved for our great personal pleasure and historical record. ☺

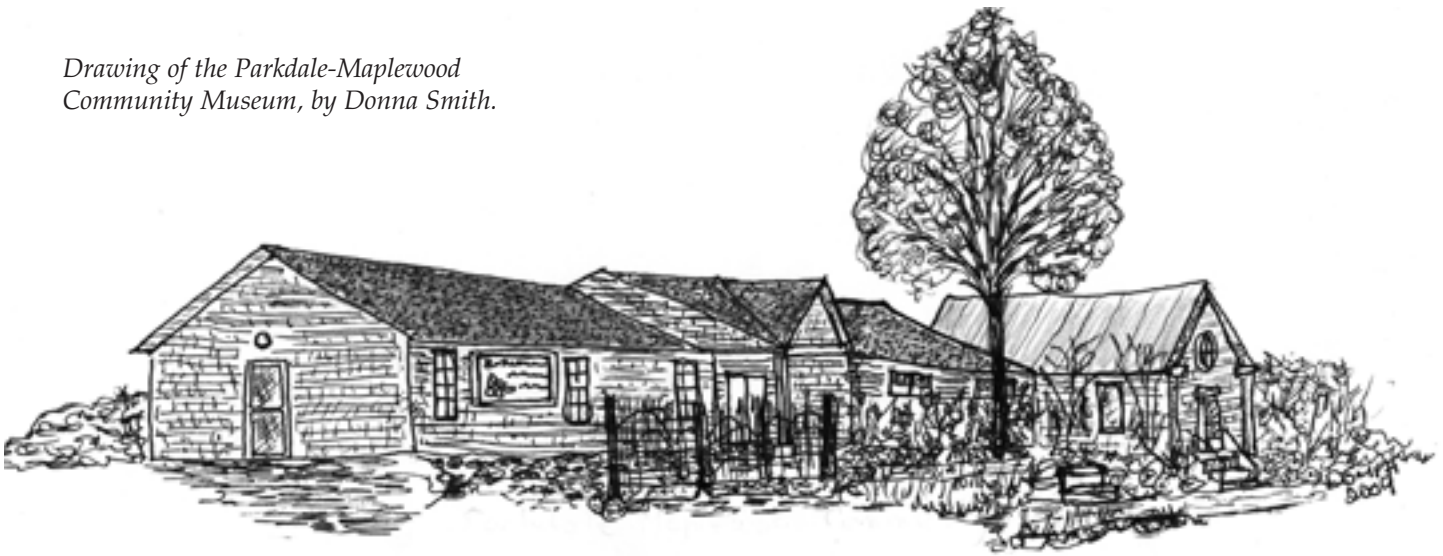
#### *Illustrations:*

*Left: Halifax looking over the Citadel, August 29, 1931. It was here that Capt. Henry Egdale, Royal Engineers, took the first aerial photograph in Canada, from a balloon, in 1883.*

*Below: An aerial view of Dalhousie College, Halifax.*



*Drawing of the Parkdale-Maplewood  
Community Museum, by Donna Smith.*



**Museum:** *Continued from page 7*

application, we did not even have a real building plan and were told the project had to be completed by January 2005! A frantic, confusing, exhausting and turbulent six months followed. Somehow we managed to get a well dug, a septic system installed, the old Maccabee Hall moved and a new building erected while operating the Museum as usual. We even held the Heritage Blueberry Festival in the middle of the mess.

In the past four years much has been accomplished. The expansion has given us toilets, a meeting room, kitchenette, office space, research centre, retail shop, storage spaces and new heating system. This has allowed major improvements in the exhibit space. A fine granite cobblestone walk and patio at the new entrance have been completed as well as other landscaping. We have even managed to pay off our debts, thanks to a major bequest received in 2008. That same year we received a very high score on a Community Museums Assistance Program Site Evaluation.

After 52 years as Chairman, Lloyd Wentzell retired in 2005. A member of his extended family, Carolea Kaulback, is now Chair of our Museum Board. She is doing a great job and among her duties has taken on the "care and feeding" of our website. Just go to [www.parkdale.ednet.ns.ca](http://www.parkdale.ednet.ns.ca) for

up-to-date news about "the little museum that could".

*The museum address is 3005 Barss Corner Road, Maplewood. From Hwy 103, take exit 11 at Blockhouse. Turn right (away from*

*Lunenburg) and drive 30 minutes to Maplewood. The museum is on the left but the large sign is on the right. Directions from Bridgewater and the Valley are on the web-site, under Contact Info. Phone 644-2893 (off-season 644-2375). ☞*

## Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia Illustrated Public Lectures

Spring 2009

**March 19 at 7:30 pm**

*Historic Courthouses of Nova Scotia*  
Philip Girard

**April 16 at 7:30 pm**

*The Churches of David Stirling (1822-1887)*  
Garry Shutlak

**May 21 at 7:30 pm**

*Struggle to Open, Struggle to Survive:*  
*St. Mary's College (1802-1952)*  
Peter McGuigan

**June 18**

*Annual General Meeting at 7:10 pm,*  
**Guest speaker: Jonathan Fowler at 8 pm**  
*Interpreting Acadian Houses in the*  
*Pre-Deportation Period*

Meetings are held in the Auditorium, Museum of Natural History.

# Another Reason to Bring Back the Trains! Restoration of Annapolis Royal Train Station wins 2008 Built Heritage Award

by Janet Morris

One way to enjoy Annapolis Royal is to take a stroll along the rail trail which can be accessed from a street opposite the Historic Gardens. The trail winds behind the many stately homes, through marsh and wildflowers, and deposits you at the former Dominion Atlantic Railway station, now the home of the Clean Annapolis River Project. A landmark in a man-made gully, it is truly worth a visit.

When enjoying and admiring this trail and the train station, one must also admire the trailblazer, Jane Nicholson, who is responsible for the restoration of the train station, which had slid into dereliction after the last train whistle sounded in 1990.

Jane Nicholson, through her company, Mrs. Nicholson Inc., seized an opportunity which naysayers thought impossible. The abandoned building was rotting, indeed flooded, with a hill of dirt banked against one of its walls. The site was reputed to be polluted, but the indefatigable Mrs. Nicholson, by research, cleansed the site – there had never been fueling done at this location.

For this second train station on the site (the first one, constructed of wood, burned in 1912), extra money was poured into the building in order to attract tourists to the many destinations – both historical and natural – at this end of the province. The Arts & Crafts influence was not widely adopted in this part of the province, but the projecting wide eaves overhanging on all sides of the building and supported by heavy wood brackets, the brick arches, multi-paned wooden windows, oak entry doors, wooden beaded-board panels on the service doors, and multi-paned wood transoms all bespeak this style. A slate roof

initially graced the building when it was completed in 1914.

The new office use does not mar what is, essentially, still a train station. The interior conveys warmth and charm with its exquisite oak paneling, warmed by the sun streaming in through the large transom windows. “The hardware on the sliding doors of the luggage room, the ticket window’s brass grille, the radiators in the two waiting rooms, the beautiful oak woodwork, the stationmaster’s office desk, the lovely old windows...all are original,” to quote Jane’s project website. The only structural changes necessary were to remove some later partition walls, change the men’s washroom into a small kitchen, and to insert an interior door into the original luggage room (it had only been accessible from the outside of the building).

Even the historic landscaping is being recreated on the sloped embankments; Jane has

researched the original landscaping for this part of the project. No doubt the planting of 1,000 daffodils contributed to the Town of Annapolis Royal winning an international “Communities in Bloom” Award in 2008.

Although it is years since the tracks have been taken up, one cannot help but hope that this project may be an impetus to bring back the trains, so we can all visit this lovely part of our province more frequently and with the ease and grace of yesteryear. If so, perhaps the Clean Annapolis River Project can be housed in Mrs. Nicholson’s next restoration project.

Congratulations, Jane Nicholson, upon being awarded the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia’s Commercial Built Heritage Award for 2008! This well documented project can be viewed on her website at [www.mrsnicholson.com](http://www.mrsnicholson.com). ☺



*An interior photograph of the restored Annapolis Royal Train Station. (Jane Nicholson)*

# President's Report for January, 2009

by Dr. Philip Pacey



*Dr. Philip Pacey, president, Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia.*

This issue of the *Griffin* will cap the first half century of the Heritage Trust. Members of the Trust have accomplished a great deal – the Heritage Property Act, hundreds of properties registered, hundreds of lectures read, briefs written, tours led, and articles printed. Many awards have been presented, summer students instructed, and books published. We have many good policies in place at the provincial and municipal levels. Nova Scotians are proud of their heritage and want to see it protected.

We still have challenges.

Armour Group Limited is asking the Utility and Review Board to allow a development that would demolish all but the facades of four registered heritage buildings in the central block of Historic Properties. Armour has now also applied to completely demolish the buildings. Saving these three blocks of buildings was the first big victory of the Trust, and we are working on two fronts to protect them. First we are legal intervenors before the Board to help Halifax Regional Council defend the buildings. Second, we are trying to convince governments to swap some vacant land for the buildings. There are more

than seven acres of vacant land in downtown Halifax, and we just need a government to release about a quarter acre to make a fair exchange for these buildings. Then the buildings could be re-occupied by the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design or other interested parties.

The second challenge is HRM by Design. This is a planning exercise, which erroneously claims to be enhancing heritage protection in downtown Halifax. Unfortunately, it is a wolf in sheep's clothing. It would sweep away the as-of-right height limits and strong policies, which have protected heritage buildings in downtown Halifax since before there was a Heritage Property Act. The height limits on 120 heritage buildings would be substantially increased. This would provide a financial incentive for a speculator to buy a heritage property, apply to demolish it, wait a year, demolish, and then build a much

larger structure.

HRM by Design would include a heritage conservation district on Barrington Street. However, a stronger district plan was approved in principle by HRM Council three years ago. HRM by Design has delayed and weakened this plan.

HRM by Design would weaken protection for views of Halifax harbour from Citadel Hill, outside the view-planes.

HRM by Design would take away many current democratic rights of the public regarding development proposals. Rights to notification, freedom of information and the right to be heard would be greatly reduced. Only developers would be allowed to appeal to the Utility and Review Board.

HRM by Design would be a serious blow to the character and economic potential of our historic capital. ☹



**Yarmouth** *Continued from page 6*

Year, 2007 by the Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia.

Tavares' last two restoration enterprises, in the same block, are the Charles Moody House and the Anne Willet-Tetford house. The former was derelict when he acquired it, and after obtaining private financial assistance and

assistance from the Nova Scotia Department of Economic Development, he has created three corporate apartments and added a conservatory. The Anne Willet-Tetford house, built by the Doane brothers, has become a luxury professional building, consisting of up-to-date office suites with modern furnishings.

These four very different projects show the possibilities of combining restoration with commercial enterprise. His photographs indicated the huge amount of work each project involved, and the end results which justified it. JD ☹

## ***Erratum***

*We mistakenly credited the photo of gardeners at Quaker House to Lisa O'Neill. Hal Oare took this charming photograph. - LF*

# Where Did She Live? Sarah Howard (1816-1871)

by Elizabeth Lambie

Sarah Howard (1816-1871) was a young mother who operated a dressmaking and millinery business in the front room of her home on Grafton Street in Halifax. Sarah's husband Henry was a wholesale pork dealer in the city and conducted his business on the export market. Henry died in 1860 intestate, leaving Sarah to support herself and four children under the age of 20. Sarah must have been a phenomenal worker, as in the next two years she managed to establish a second business selling dry goods on Granville Street. Sarah's oldest son was an assistant in this business but Sarah kept control of both businesses.

R.G. Dun, a company evaluating the credit worthiness of individuals and firms (later to become Dun and Bradstreet) wrote on their evaluation of Sarah that she was "a woman of active business habits." Indeed, her success in business proved this to be true.

In a period when a woman would have experienced great difficulty in securing sufficient start-up monies Sarah managed to obtain large mortgages from a wealthy lady in Halifax by the name of Ann Vass and from Mr. Norman Kinnear, a gentleman from the same city. With profits from her business and now the mortgage monies, Sarah commissioned the construction of the gracious building presently standing on the corner of Prince and Hollis Streets (1695 Hollis). This elaborate, smooth-faced Italianate freestone structure makes a significant contribution to Halifax's architectural fabric today.

In the five floors both wholesale and retail business was carried out. Each floor specialized in various needs and wants for family clothing and accessories. Indeed this has been considered the very first department store in Nova Scotia. Sarah's business was the very first in Nova Scotia to

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Sarah Howard (Notman Collection, courtesy of NSARM)

employ travelling salesmen and she was the first to advertise her very attractive wares by having illustrations of them painted on the sides of her horse-drawn delivery carts. Sarah really believed in advertising in a large way, regularly displaying the many lovely items available, in newspaper advertisements taking up a third of the entire page – and always in the centre position. It has been suggested that in that period, a woman's respectability

might have been questioned if she advertised her products publicly to the community. Sarah was evidently immune to such a drawback to business! However, she did not take the chance of using her full name in a business world favouring men; her company was always called S. Howard and Son. The oldest son, Henry, had formally joined the company five years following his father's death. The address of S. Howard and

Continued on page 14

**Howard** *Continued from page 13*

Son was 169-171-173 Hollis Street. The questions being asked are, "Where did Sarah live on Grafton Street?" and "In which building on Granville Street did she establish her dry goods shop?"

The architect/builder/contractor for the building on Hollis and Prince Streets is also a mystery. Is there perhaps a reader who knows?

*Miss Ann Vass (ca 1807-1882), the wealthy woman from whom Sarah Howard obtained a large mortgage, was the only daughter of Nicholas Vass (ca 1785-1863), merchant, Bedford Row. When Nicholas Vass died, he left his daughter an estate valued at £30,000 (\$150,000). She built a house on Morris Street*

## March 16 Deadline for Provincial Heritage Grants

Kevin Barrett, NS Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage, reminds owners of registered properties that the deadline to make application under the Heritage Division's Heritage Grant Program is approaching quickly. This includes applications for the Materials and Labour Grant. If you know of any qualified owners who are considering an application, please remind them of the March 16, 2009 deadline for submissions. As usual, all grant applications are considered on a first come, first serve basis. Should you have any questions, please contact his office at 902 424-5647.

*designed by David Stirling and used the money in various philanthropic pursuits, including a school of industry. She was overly generous and a little gullible; many took advantage of her largesse. At the time of her death her estate was valued at about \$10,000. GS*

*There is a bust of Sarah Howard in the lobby of Founders Square, 1701 Hollis Street, next door to Sarah Howard's building. McAlpine's 1870-71 Directory gives the home address for both Henry Howard and Sarah Howard as 19 Pleasant. Ed. ☞*

**S. HOWARD & SON,**  
GENERAL IMPORTERS & WHOLESALE DEALERS IN  
**BRITISH & FOREIGN DRY GOODS,**  
Corner of Hollis & Prince Sts.,  
HALIFAX, N. S.

BESIDES OUR WELL KNOWN CHEAP AND GOOD MAKES IN  
**RICH BLACK SILKS**  
AND  
**FRENCH KID GLOVES,**  
WE WOULD DIRECT THE ATTENTION OF WHOLESALE BUYERS TO  
**NUMEROUS CHEAP LOTS**  
IN  
**COTTONS, FLANNELS, CLOTHS AND DRESS GOODS,**  
WHICH WILL BE FOUND TO BE MUCH UNDER VALUE.  
**SPECIAL NOVELTIES FOR WHOLESALE MILLINERS.**  
New Goods by every Steamer.  
**S. HOWARD & SON.**

*Above, an advertisement, from Rogers' Photographic Advertising Album (1871).  
Below, "S. Howard & Son, Importers of Dry Goods (retail entrance)" from Rogers' Photographic Advertising Album (1871).*



# Heritage for Sale

**The Ruggles-Munro House**  
833 St. George Street, Annapolis  
Royal

The Ruggles-Munro House has just received the 2008 Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia award for excellence in residential heritage preservation. This municipally registered home also won the 2008 Town of Annapolis Royal award for excellence in built heritage.

It sits on almost one acre of professionally landscaped property on the main street of Canada's oldest town. The house started life circa 1818 as a one-and-a-half storey home facing the old Fort. By 1829, it was a two-storey Georgian residence facing the main street and a third storey attic was added by 1834. (These dates are corroborated through a dendrochronology study undertaken by Mount Allison University in 2007.)

For almost forty years it was the home of Israel William Ruggles, a well-off merchant, and is mentioned in Charlotte Perkins' book, *The Romance of Old Annapolis Royal*, as one of "the prettiest houses in town". Walter and Isabella Gray added the Victorian bay windows in 1873, but the house, run down and empty, was little changed architecturally when purchased by Mrs. Nicholson Inc. in 2006 from the Munro family, who had lived in it for almost sixty years. Hence the name, the Ruggles-Munro house.

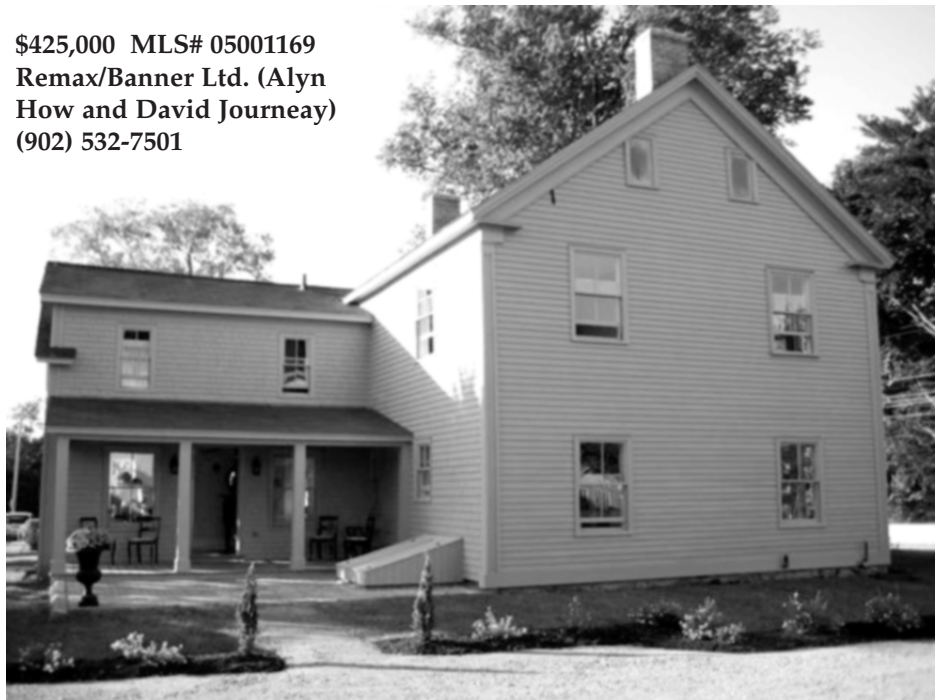
The home's unique feature is its second storey ballroom. This stunning room, the home of Mr. Ruggles' famous "entertainments", runs the length of the house and features its original Georgian fireplace mantel, floors and door and window casings. It is now the master bedroom. A walk-in closet and master bath with separate shower and vintage tub complete the enfilade. Also on the second floor are two other spacious bedrooms and a family bathroom. The attic comprises a

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*Front and side views of the Ruggles-Munro House, St. George Street, Annapolis Royal (Christine Igot photo). More photos on the website: [www.mrsnicholson.com](http://www.mrsnicholson.com) chart the transformation of this property.*

**\$425,000 MLS# 05001169**  
**Remax/Banner Ltd. (Alyn**  
**How and David Journey)**  
**(902) 532-7501**



playroom, large closet and open storage.

Downstairs, there is a large light-filled kitchen, dining room, front parlour, back parlour (which could be a bedroom or office), full bathroom and a stunning back sitting room encircled with windows. All services are new: wiring, plumbing, heating and ventilation. There is a high, dry basement and a separate garage with storage.

To see the Before and After pictures of this project, and to understand why it won the 2008 residential Heritage Trust award, please go to the website - [www.mrsnicholson.com](http://www.mrsnicholson.com) - and click on Ruggles-Munro House, or contact the agents. The sale price includes all fixtures, carpets and furnishings. ☺

# Programs Sponsored by Other Societies

## **Acadia Lifelong Learning Centre**

Wednes., May 20-June 10, 4:30-6:30 pm:  
John Whidden and Patricia  
Townsend, *Town & Gown: The  
Development of Wolfville as Seen  
Through its Architecture*. \$60 ALL  
members, \$75 non-members, 585-  
1434, [www.all.acadiau.ca](http://www.all.acadiau.ca).

## **Black Loyalist Heritage Society**

April TBA: Movie & pasta night. *The  
Little Black School House* by Dr. Sylvia  
Hamilton  
June 6-7: Official opening, Old School  
House Museum, Birchtown Road,  
Shelburne. \$2.50, 1-888-354-0772.

## **Colchester Historical Society**

March 26, 7:30 pm: Dr. Ian Cameron,  
President, Dalhousie Medical History  
Society, 895-6284, [colchestermuseum@ns.aliantzinc.ca](mailto:colchestermuseum@ns.aliantzinc.ca).

## **Cole Harbour Rural Heritage Society**

May 10, 1-4 pm: Mother's Day Tea. \$8  
adult, \$5 child, 434-0222,  
[www.coleharbourfarmmuseum.ca/chrlhs.html](http://www.coleharbourfarmmuseum.ca/chrlhs.html).

## **Cumberland County Museum & Archives**

May 28, 7 pm: Peter Landry, author of  
*The Lion and the Lily*. 667-2561.

## **Dartmouth Heritage Museum**

To March 21: Skyline of a Community  
– Imperial Oil: 1918-2008. Tues.-Fri.  
10-5, Sat. 10-1&2-5, \$2, 464-2300,  
[www.dartmouthheritagemuseum.ns.ca](http://www.dartmouthheritagemuseum.ns.ca).

## **Elder Learners**

Sat. April 4, 8, 25 and May 2, 9:30-12:  
Ron Beed, *The Irish in NS*. Course \$60  
(\$80 non-member), St. Mary's Univ.,  
420-5020.

## **Industrial Heritage Society of NS**

Meets at 7:30 pm, Maritime Museum  
of Atlantic.  
March 2: Judith Tulloch, *Reach for the  
Sky: The Aerial Experiment*  
Association.  
April 6: Robert Summerby-Murray,  
*Where's the Smoke? Smoke's absence  
contributes to an artificial under-  
standing of our [industrial] past.*  
Sat. May 23: Field trip to Atlantic  
Canada Aviation Museum.  
[www.industrialheritagens.ca](http://www.industrialheritagens.ca). or  
[jcandow@hotmail.com](mailto:jcandow@hotmail.com).

## **Jane's Walk**

May 2 and 3 nation-wide:  
Neighbourhood explorations. Free,  
489-7855, [janewright@eastlink.ca](mailto:janewright@eastlink.ca),  
[www.janeswalk.net](http://www.janeswalk.net).

## **Mahone Bay Settlers Museum**

May 30, 9:45 am: Early-bird Pie  
Auction.  
May 30, 10 am-noon: 30th Annual "Our  
Best to You" Food Sale, St. James  
Parish Hall.  
[info@settlersmuseum.ns.ca](mailto:info@settlersmuseum.ns.ca).

## **Maritime Museum of the Atlantic**

April 24: Provincial Historica Fair.  
Free admission all day.  
Select Tues. 7 pm (free admission after  
5:30 pm): *Tales of Pirates & Privateers*  
of the North Atlantic. 424-7490.

## **Musée acadien & Centre de recherche, W. Pubnico**

Thurs. 1:30-3:30 pm, Demonstration of  
traditional skills  
March 18, 7 pm: Laurent d'Entremont  
and others, *Our history in stories*. \$3.  
First Wednes. of month, 7:30-9:30 pm:  
Soirée de musique/Kitchen Party.  
Sylvesters Club, Centre de Pombcoup,  
W. Pubnico, \$5, tea, coffee, juice.  
762-3380, [www.museeacadien.ca](http://www.museeacadien.ca).

## **NS Archaeology Society**

Meets at 7:30 pm, NS Museum  
Auditorium  
March 24: Darryl Kelman, the  
Hawthorne Farm Site: Archaeological  
Mitigation of an Early Nineteenth  
Century Rural Site, Gays River.  
April 28: TBA.  
May 26: Jonathan Fowler/Brenda  
Dunn, TBA  
466-0473, [rhjs74@netscape.net](mailto:rhjs74@netscape.net)

## **Parkdale/Maplewood Community Museum**

April 25, 1-6 pm: Maple syrup festival.  
\$12 (adults), \$6 (12 and up), under 12  
free, 644-2877.

## **Ross Creek Arts Centre, Canning**

March 16-20: March Break Arts Camp.  
582-3842,  
[www.artscentre.ca/programs/youth/marchbreak.cfm](http://www.artscentre.ca/programs/youth/marchbreak.cfm).

## **Royal NS Historical Society**

Meets at 7:30 pm, NS Archives  
March 18: H. Amani Whitfield,  
*Slavery and the Loyalists*.  
April 15 at 6 for 6:30 pm: Annual  
Dinner, University Club, Dal., reserva-  
tions 454-6557. Speaker: Richard  
Davies, T.C. Haliburton and  
Steamships.  
May 20: Norman Fergusson, Margaret  
Graham (1870-1924): Founder of the  
Canadian Women's Press Club.

## **Scott Manor House, Bedford**

April 18: Heritage evening. Menu and  
program TBA.  
832-2336, [www.scottmanorhouse.ca](http://www.scottmanorhouse.ca).

## **Wolfville Historical Society**

March 18, 2 pm: Merritt Gibson,  
*Shipbuilding in Northern Kings  
County*. Wolfville Fire Hall. ☞