

Carleton County Historical Society, Inc.
128 Connell Street, Woodstock, N. B.

Old County Court House



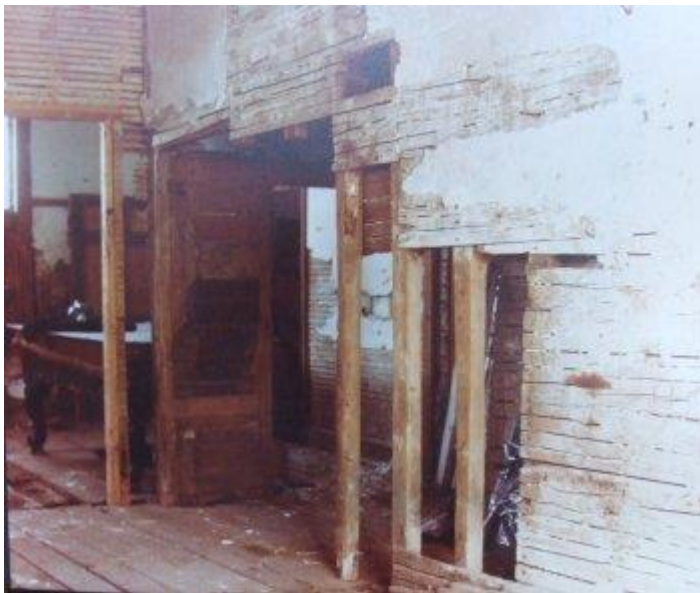
In 1832, when Carleton County was created, Col. Richard Ketchum, then a member of the Legislative Assembly, donated land at the "Upper Corner" for a court house and jail, thereby establishing Upper Woodstock as the shire town of the new County. The court house was completed the following year and served as a site for concerts, fairs and other public events, in addition to being the County seat of justice. In 1852, the court house was the meeting place for the first County Council in New Brunswick.

It was here the attackers of the July 12th, 1847, Orange Lodge parade were tried before Judge Parker in 1848. Here, George Gee was tried and convicted on April 26, 1904, for the murder of his cousin, Millie Gee. The old jail at Upper Woodstock having burned in May, 1901, Mr. Gee earned the dubious honor of becoming the first man hanged on the grounds of the "new" jail at Woodstock.

In 1866 an additional 20 feet was added to the north end of the courtroom under the direction of master-builder Hezekiah Stoddard, a resident of the community. But as early as 1847, the village of Woodstock was agitating to be named the shire town of the

County and have the court house moved there. Their campaign was eventually successful — construction of a new court house was begun at Woodstock in the summer of 1909.

In January of 1911, the County Council sold the old court house and land to Byron Robinson who used it as a barn. The property later passed to Frank Hayden, a horse trader, who also used it as a barn. Two windows in the south end were replaced by barn doors; the balconies, posts, railings, judges' bench and jury platform were removed, along with a section of the west wall and some two dozen 40-foot cross members that held the ceiling in place. Some of the roof-bearing beams were cut to accommodate a travelling hay fork over the mows, and one was completely removed, weakening the entire structure.



When the Carleton County Historical Society was formed in 1960, one of their main purposes was the acquisition and restoration of the old County Court House. The photo at right provides some indication of the general condition of the building at that time.

In November, 1960, an Agreement of Sale was made with Mr, and Mrs. Frank Hayden, and in February, 1962, the deed to the Old Court House was officially signed.

This was followed by fund raising activities, intensive research, fund raising, work parties, fund raising and more fund raising. With the able guidance and assistance of Peter John Stokes, B. Arch., LL.D., R.C.A., F.R.A.I.C., F.A.P.T.I., O.N., Canada's foremost restoration architect, original construction details were determined, formula for original paints and plaster discovered and utilized.

Older inhabitants provided essential descriptions of furnishings and layout, enabling the acquisition of many original items. Research, mainly by Ken and Dees Homer, facilitated accurate reproductions of items ranging from pewter inkwells through linen towels to wall coverings.

The restoration process spanned slightly over two decades, but the rigid adherence to historically accurate detail resulted in both awards to the Society and the designation by the Province of New Brunswick as an historic site.



The Old Court House was officially opened on June 25th, 1986, by H.R.H. Princess Anne. Since then, the restored Court House has hosted various events, including the annual Victorian Christmas, and is a popular site for weddings. Member of the 2nd Battalion DeLancey's Brigade, Capt. Allison's Company, historical re-enactors from Saint John, camped on the grounds of the Court House one weekend in August, 2005, entertaining visitors with displays of field cooking, drill and musketry.

Guided tours are available through the week during summer, and can usually be arranged by appointment at other times. At present, admission is not charged, but donations are appreciated.