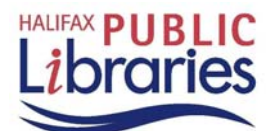




War Memorial: Recommendation

Halifax Central Library



September 2011

Recommendation

The Royal Canadian Legion, Nova Scotia / Nunavut Command approves the memorial plans, as presented, for the new Central Library, Spring Garden Road, Halifax, Nova Scotia scheduled to open in 2014

Background

The Spring Garden Road Memorial Public Library opened November 12, 1951 as a memorial to honour those lost to the wars of 1914-1918 and 1939-1945. Plans are now well underway to build a Central Library across the street from the present building. The new library is scheduled to open in early 2014 at which time the current library will close.

The Library Board is concerned that the memorial aspect of the Spring Garden Road Memorial Public Library be respectfully addressed. To that end, library staff met with representatives of The Royal Canadian Legion, Nova Scotia / Nunavut Command in January 2009. As a result of those meetings the following working principles were developed and approved by The Royal Canadian Legion, Nova Scotia / Nunavut Command and the Halifax Regional Library Board.

Working Principles:

- Halifax Public Libraries will preserve the original intent of the Memorial within the new Central Library.
- The history of the original memorial will be preserved and easily accessible
- The Memorial Book will be included in the new Central Library and will remain on display
- A rededication ceremony of the memorial will be held with the opening of the Central Library.
- Consideration will be given to an exterior designation, either outside of the Central library or on the original site, relating to the memorial
- Consideration will be given to commemorating the memorial in a room, or an area, in the new Central Library.
- Consideration will be given to developing an additional Book of Remembrance with lists of war dead in subsequent conflicts
- All plans for the transition of the memorial will be developed in consultation with The Royal Canadian Legion, Nova Scotia / Nunavut Command.

Proposal for the Memorial in the Central Library

It is proposed that a new memorial be located on the fourth floor of the Central Library adjacent to the Local History Room. It is proposed that it include:

- the existing two Books of Remembrance
- A third Book of Remembrance if The Royal Canadian Legion, Nova Scotia / Nunavut Command so chooses.

The architects have provided a preliminary design for the case to house the Books of Remembrance. The proposed design is attached as Appendix I.

In addition the Library will:

- Provide a digitized version of the third memorial book in order to provide access to the names via the Library website.
- Investigate the possibility of a providing a digitized version of the Books of Remembrance adjacent to the books on display in the Central Library.
- Create a virtual exhibit to provide ongoing access to the history of the original memorial. The proposal for that exhibit is attached as Appendix II.

The following items will be offered to the Maritime Command Museum, if the Museum does not accept the items The Royal Canadian Legion, Nova Scotia / Nunavut Command will be notified:

- **Flags and Standards**
A Union Jack, a flag of the British Empire Service League, two standards of the Silver Cross Women of Canada.
- **Silver Cross**
A replica of the Silver Cross presented by the government of Canada to all mothers and widows of those who died in the service of their country during WWI, WWII and the Korean War. It was donated to the Library in 1950 by the Silver Cross Women of Canada.

Costs

The cost of housing and moving the Books of Remembrance will be included in the costs of the New Central Library. There is therefore no cost to The Royal Canadian Legion, Nova Scotia / Nunavut Command to transition the existing memorial.

If The Royal Canadian Legion, Nova Scotia / Nunavut Command chooses to add a third Book of Remembrance, the cost of the book would be the responsibility of the Legion. Information regarding the costs and process for developing a third Book of Remembrance is provided as a separate report.

Appendix I – Preliminary Design



Appendix II – Proposed Virtual Exhibit

The Spring Garden Road Memorial Public Library was built as a memorial to honour those who gave their lives in World Wars I and II. It is intended that the memorial history of the current Spring Garden Road Memorial Public Library be preserved and acknowledged in the new Central Library. In addition to the preservation and display of the *Books of Remembrance* in the new Central Library, it is proposed that the memorial history of the library be preserved and made accessible worldwide via the Halifax Public Libraries website. The virtual exhibit will be comprised of:

A History of the Spring Garden Road Memorial Public Library as a War Memorial

A brief history will be written to provide the background and time-line of the library as a war memorial.

Memorial Artifacts Photo Gallery

The memorial artifacts will be photographed and accompanied by a history and description of each item.

- Cornerstone (exterior of the Spring Garden Road Memorial Public Library)
- Memorial Plaque
- Silver Cross
- Books of Remembrance
- Flags and Standards
- Murals (painted by Donald C. MacKay and currently on exhibit at the Maritime Command Museum)

Books of Remembrance

The Books of Remembrance, commemorating the men and women who gave their lives in World Wars I and II and the Korean War, were digitized in 2008 and are currently accessible via our website. The books are fully searchable by first and last name and rank. A web link will be established from the memorial exhibit web-page to the digitized *Books of Remembrance*.

Key Documents

The history of the library as a war memorial is preserved in print and currently available at the Spring Garden Road Memorial Public Library's Reference Department. Key documents such as correspondence, council minutes, newspaper articles will be considered for the virtual exhibit.

Appendix III – Background & History

A committee made up of local groups, politicians and businessmen was created in 1945 to decide on an appropriate memorial to honour those lost to the wars of 1914-1918 and 1939-1945. It was “agreed that the war memorial for Halifax should be in the form of a library.” (*Submission Halifax Memorial Library Committee*, April 1, 1946). Approval by Halifax City Council for the construction of the Library was obtained in December 1947 (*Herald*, December 12, 1947). The desire to acquire a new library more fitting to the growing city of Halifax was nothing new; in fact, there had been some unsuccessful talks about a new library as early as 1901 (Crowdis, D.K. *Brief History of Agitation for the Halifax Memorial Library*). By 1945, with WWII just ending, the occasion was ripe for it to serve as a memorial as well. The first sod was turned on April 21, 1949, in time to celebrate the city’s 200th anniversary. On November 11, 1949 (Remembrance Day) the cornerstone was laid under the auspices of The Royal Canadian Legion, Nova Scotia / Nunavut Command. The library opened its doors to the public on November 12, 1951.

Memorial Items

Over the years, the library has amassed a great number of items and symbols that strengthen its role as a memorial. Some of these include flags, standards, plaques, a Silver Cross replica, Book of Remembrance (2), and murals (since donated to Maritime Command Museum).

Flags and Standards

There are two glass cases on either side of the Spring Garden entrance; one contains a Union Jack and a flag of the British Empire Service League, the other has two standards of the Silver Cross Women of Canada.

Silver Cross

The Silver Cross hanging in the Library is a replica of the silver cross presented by the government of Canada to all mothers and widows of those who died in the service of their country during WWI, WWII and the Korean War. It was donated to the Library in 1950 by the Silver Cross Women of Canada.

Books of Remembrance

There are two books of remembrance; the first one contains the names of Haligonians who perished during WWI. It also lists the cause of death.

The second book lists the names of the 677 men and women from Halifax who perished during WWII and the Korean War, and was donated to the Library in 1955 by the Silver Cross Women of Canada. Both

are on public display. The books have been digitized and are available on the Halifax Public Libraries' website in [electronic format](#).

Cornerstone

The cornerstone bears the mention, "This stone was laid under the auspices of the Halifax Branches of the Canadian Legion on November 11, 1949 by His Worship Lt. Col. GS Kinley, VD, Mayor of Halifax. The sod was turned for this building by Mayor JE Ahern on April 21, 1949."

Plaque

A plaque on the building explains that "This building was erected in memory of those who gave their lives in defence of their country 1914-1918 1939-1945. For their faith – for their courage – for their sacrifice, we will remember them."

Murals

Three murals were commissioned and painted by local artist Commander Donald C. MacKay in 1951. They were exhibited in the library and donated to the Maritime Command Museum (CFB Halifax) in 1974.

The Library as a Living Memorial

The library was chosen as a memorial because there was a need for a new public facility, but also because of a consensus that an inanimate object such as a statue or monument would not do justice to the memory of all those who were lost (*see quoted sources below*). The library, as an institution that fosters growth and learning, was vested with the role of a living memorial, one that would continue to consecrate the memories of those who died by promoting and defending the very things that were suppressed during the war: freedom of speech and freedom of study:

"The lack of such a library in Halifax is felt by many to be a disgrace. Nothing could be more symbolic of the sacrifices of those we wish to honour than a library housing books which Adolf Hitler burnt. A well-designed library would be a lasting Memorial, and with the passage of the years would evermore fittingly hallow the memories of those who died that others might enjoy freedom of speech and freedom of study." – Petition to Mayor and Council, November 1947

"The committee, believing that those who served in the Second German War deserved a living, rather than an inanimate memorial, urged that a library should be established to honor them." –Mail Star, Jan. 15, 1948

"An even greater memorial to those heroes of our wars is the ideal on which the whole building is erected – the faith of the citizens of Halifax in the democratic ideal of making freely available knowledge to each and every resident of the city." – Library document, 1951

Groups Involved

The **Canadian Legion**, the **Silver Cross Women of Canada** and the **Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE)** were actively involved in the planning and outfitting of the library.

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