

# Then & Now

## BANK OF NOVA SCOTIA, QUEEN AND RIVER BRANCH (1910-1998)

By Coralina Lemos, Historian and Author, corktownhistory.com

Whenever I stand at the Queen Street Viaduct looking towards Corktown, the one building that always stands out from my vantage point is a buff brick, two-storey structure at the junction of Queen and River Streets.

Identified as the Bank of Nova Scotia it first opened two doors west from its current location at 533 Queen Street East in 1910, while plans for the construction of the current building got underway. Increasing the number of bank branches throughout the city was part of an expansion plan from head office following its move from Halifax to Toronto ten years earlier. Overseeing the financial day-to-day operations of the branch was Norman W. Berkinshaw, a ten-year bank veteran.

"...the aim of the directors and management has always been to [make] the Bank of Nova Scotia a safe depository for the savings of the public ..." (1910, The Globe)

Although the neighbourhood was already serviced by a Bank of Toronto branch at Queen and Parliament Streets, the future of a Nova Scotia branch at Queen was well positioned as the city got ready for the construction of a "high level bridge over the Don," also known as the Queen Street Viaduct that was completed in 1911. To protect the passage from flooding, the grounds on both sides of the bridge were elevated and its steel construction accommodated double tracks for the weight of newer streetcars. The upgrade also helped to increase passenger travel along the King and Queen Street corridors.



Following the purchase of a vacant lot architects Andrew Sharp and James H. Brown, business partners, were commissioned to design a building in the Edwardian Classical style that was completed by 1912. Initially known as the 'Don Branch' its name was later changed to the 'Queen and River Branch'.

"...officers found guilty of immoral practices, or visiting gambling houses or saloons will be dismissed..." (1902, Manual of Rules and Regulations)

After years of servicing the financial needs of individuals and businesses the Bank of Nova Scotia at 544 Queen

Street East closed in 1998. The building was 'heritage listed' in 2019 and is now subject to Ontario's Bill 23 rules. Like many throughout the city it will be removed from the municipality's heritage register unless it is 'designated'.

As of August of 2019, River Street Endodontics is the site's newest occupant. Dr. Sara Markovic is a solo practitioner specializing in root canal therapy, microsurgery, and management of trauma. She chose to open her practice in Corktown due to the area's growth and office location. Markovic says, "We love the community and greenspace nearby."



# K Club

By Glen Bullock

Since 1921, the Kiwanis Boys and Girls Club has been dedicated to working with and enhancing the lives of children, youth, and their families.

*The snack was late.*

Normally there was an older man named Rick that delivered the food—every weekday, just after three o'clock. He'd pull up in an old, tired-looking school bus, his forehead covered in sweat. He'd give a few honks and then swing the doors open and hand Myles a crate of food.

It was one of those big plastic crates you see in the supermarket that holds loaves of bread, but this had pre-bagged snacks on it. Things like pizza pockets, or beef patties, or slices of fruit.

*But today he was late.*

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Since 1921, the Kiwanis Boys and Girls Club has been dedicated to working with and enhancing the lives of children, youth, and their families.

The Club takes a preventative approach to tackling a broad range of issues facing young people in our city today, including child poverty, youth education, and youth violence.

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The children sat around the classroom, yelling, grabbing onto each other. Getting restless.

"Keep them busy, will you?" Michelle said to Myles, and then went out into the hall to try calling Rick again. And Myles stood in front of the classroom, both hands on his hips.

"What's the snack today?" one of the little girls asked. She had long braids running down her back.

"It's a surprise," Myles replied. And the girl raised her eyebrows, giving him an unimpressed look.

"Where's the food?" another boy asked. "I'm hungry!"