

Our Story Through Time....

The “Nova Scotian” opened its doors on June 23, 1930 with 130 rooms, five suites and the elegant Atlantic Ballroom, which accommodated up to 275 guests for a dinner.

The hotel was considered to be reminiscent of grand railway hotels all over the world, and one of its kind in Eastern Canada. The Canadian National Train Station also opened next door in 1928, connecting South End Halifax to the rest of Canada.

The hotel, like others opened by Canadian National Hotels, was designed by Archibald and Schofield, comprising



the Canadian architects John Smith Archibald and John Schofield. It was designed as a complex with the Halifax railway station and the Cornwallis Park across the street. The central axis of the park is aligned with the front entrance of the Nova Scotian.

The size of the hotel kitchen is immense in today's terms, because of its original connection with CN. The hotel served as a supply base for the trains, preparing all meals and also the provision of laundry services for the train linens and bedding.

There was a permanent exhibit outside the hotel from 1930 to the early 40's near the current Terminal Building. It featured two of the oldest surviving locomotives in the world dating from the 1830's, the Albion and the Samson. They can now be found in the Nova Scotia Museum of Industry in Stellarton, NS.

The hotel was 8 stories high, and on the 8th floor, there was a beautiful tearoom that overlooked the city of Halifax and Cornwallis Park, which is directly across the street from the hotel. The tearoom was surrounded by a beautiful rose garden, and was one of the most popular and well-respected venues in the city.

Rose gardens were also located at the rear of the hotel, which overlooks Halifax Harbour. The rear of the hotel also has a full view of the Port, where in early days, luxury liners docked, as Halifax has the second largest natural harbour in the world, next to Sydney, Australia. Today, over 130 cruise ships visit our port annually, still docking directly behind the hotel.

The Atlantic Ballroom became synonymous with big bands and dancing. It was THE ballroom in town; a place to see and be seen! The extensive stage hosted the largest names of the era and the room was the beginning of many friendships and relationships.

The guestrooms were considered the best in the region, and to this day the original wing has huge closets. In the day, there was no such thing as “carry-on” luggage, and where travel was often for extended periods, customers brought huge steamer trunks, and simply needed a closet large enough to house them.

To service the hotel, Nova Scotia Power Corporation built a power plant beside the hotel which has a tunnel connecting the two buildings. Today, the tunnel is not used, and the electrical plant, once also a film studio, has been transformed into their headquarters.

Another unique use of the hotel was for a radio station, where programs were broadcast from Studio H, on the 8th floor, possibly due to the height of the hotel and its great location in the city.

The hotel grew in size in the late 1950s, when an additional 161 rooms were added, including 9 more suites. Significant meeting





space was also added and the now famous Commonwealth Ballroom, which has hosted royalty and dignitaries from all over the world.

Elizabeth II, Queen of the Commonwealth has stayed in the hotel twice, once in the 1950s and once in the 1970s. Prince Charles and Princess Diana attended a state dinner on June 15, 1983 at the Hotel Nova Scotian, hosted by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. The 700 guests enjoyed a dinner of Canadian wines and cuisine and Trudeau told the Royal couple they had begun their visit in “the most friendly part of Canada.” A crowd of thousands grew outside the hotel hoping to catch a glimpse of the couple before they returned to the HMV Britannia for their departure from Halifax

Adding to the appeal of the hotel with the 1950s addition were food and beverage facilities which catered to the local community as opposed to just the hotel guest. The Evangeline Room was considered to be the most elegant restaurant in the city, where guests would be greeted by tuxedoed maître d’ and waiters, and could dance the night away to live entertainment – grand piano, silver, china, crystal and all the trimmings. The Eager Beaver Bar extended across the main front of the hotel and was the most popular bar east of Montreal. Many a political and business career was made or broken within the walls of this still often spoken about bar.

In the early 1980s, Canadian National sold the hotel, and it became the Halifax Hilton. Hilton managed the hotel until 1993, when the hotel closed its doors. They had bid on a project whereby the hotel would become a Casino/Hotel, a new industry to the province government controlled. The project was not awarded to the Hilton, so therefore Hilton and the owners of the hotel, Revenue Properties of Toronto, parted company and the hotel was put up for sale.

In April 1996, NewCastle Hotels & Resorts of Shelton, CT, purchased the hotel and proceeded to invest another \$4 million immediately into the facility. This was in addition to the \$15 million that Hilton had invested in the late 80’s to upgrade the property.

Re-opened on August 6, 1996 as the Westin Nova Scotian, the hotel has 310 guestrooms, including 10 suites and 23, 000 sq. ft. of meeting and pre-function space.

NewCastle Hotels & Resorts has continued to invest significant dollars in the property since its’ initial takeover to further enhance the property’s services and amenities. The AAA Four Diamond hotel now features Westin’s signature Heavenly Bed in all suites and guestrooms. The meeting space has been upgraded, but still has maintained its exquisite charm. elements on hollis offers contemporary global cuisine created with local



ingredients. Roy’s Lounge & Patio, offers a contemporary atmosphere to enjoy Starbucks coffee by day, and local craft beers, cocktails and snacks at night. An indoor pool, jacuzzi, and the innovative Westin Workout ensure guests of the hotel have access to all facilities and services expected of the Westin brand.

Roy’s is named after long-term bartending legend Roy Clorey, who started his career at The Nova Scotian Hotel in 1963. Roy was voted one of the top three bartenders in Halifax in 2016. In June 2017, Roy finally decided to hang up his martini glass and retire, but he still visits frequently.

The hotel is the annual host of one of the most prestigious events in Canada each November, The Halifax International Security Forum. Further, it has once again become the hotel of choice for high profile social events, large conventions and has established itself as a key player in the corporate group and business travel market segments.