

*Phyllis Ruth Blakeley, 1922-1986*



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Phyllis Ruth Blakeley, CM, LL.D., D.Litt., Former Provincial Archivist for Nova Scotia, died in Halifax on 25 October 1986, following a brief illness.

Born and educated in Halifax, Dr. Blakeley held B.A. (with Distinction), B.Ed., and M.A. degrees from Dalhousie University. After a brief teaching career, she became a Research Assistant at the Public Archives of Nova Scotia in 1945. She was named

Assistant Archivist in 1959 and Associate Archivist in 1977. In 1982, she became the first woman appointed Provincial Archivist for Nova Scotia. She retired in 1985.

Dr. Blakeley's career spanned forty years of dedicated service as an archivist, historian, author, editor, educator, and community worker. Her honours in these fields are many. She received a Doctor of Law degree from Dalhousie University in 1977, and a Doctor of Letters from St. Mary's University in 1983.

In 1978 she was made a Member of the Order of Canada, and in 1979 a Fellow of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society. The Canadian Historical Association awarded her a Certificate of Merit in 1981 for her exceptional contribution to Atlantic Provinces history. And in 1985, the Federation of Nova Scotia Heritage established the Dr. Phyllis R. Blakeley Lifetime Achievement Award in her honour.

Dr. Blakeley was Vice-President of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society; a charter member and Past-President of the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia; Past-President of the Nova Scotia Branch, Canadian Authors Association; Past-President of the Halifax Branch, Zonta International; and honorary Vice-President of the United Empire Loyalists Association of Canada. She was also a charter member of the Association of Canadian Archivists and a member of the Canadian Historical Association and the University Women's Club (Dalhousie). She will be remembered by all these groups for her enthusiasm, dedication, and unstinting effort.

Her publications included, among many others, *Glimpses of Halifax* (1949); *Nova Scotia — A Brief History* (1956), which was a standard text in provincial schools for several years; *The Story of Prince Edward Island* (1963); and *Nova Scotia's Two Remarkable Giants: Angus McAskill and Anna Swan* (1970). Her scholarship was meticulous and widely recognized. During the late 1960s, she began a rewarding collaboration with the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, for which she had written some thirty-one historical biographies to date, including a landmark examination of Sir Samuel Cunard, in Volume IX (1976).

Dr. Blakeley's editing credits included *Eleven Exiles: Accounts of Loyalists of the American Revolution* (1982). She also served on the editorial advisory board of the *Dalhousie Review*; the Historical Records Committee of the Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces; and the council of the Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia.

Phyllis Blakeley's contributions to Nova Scotian history and to the archival profession in Canada will not soon be forgotten. A generation of schoolchildren first developed an interest in their provincial history through her textbooks. Two generations of pupils were captivated by her witty and enthusiastic school tours through the old Archives building on the Dalhousie campus. And a multitude of university students and faculty have been inspired by her great love — the story of our past, which she presented as a gift to all those who wished to learn.

Historical organizations throughout Nova Scotia have benefitted from four decades of her unflinching support and assistance; many of them owe their continued existence to her belief in the preservation and dissemination of regional history. National organizations have been influenced by her efforts to achieve high standards in the archival profession and by her belief in the usefulness of group action.

Perhaps most of all, Phyllis Blakeley will be missed for her humanity. Her courtesy and kindness to researchers will remain legendary, as will the direct assistance and encouragement she provided to all students of history. Her life and career exemplified the very best from an age of archival ethics which has come and gone and will not come again. Those whose lives she touched have been most fortunate indeed.

**Lois Kernaghan**  
Halifax, Nova Scotia