



Admiralty House Ballroom, 8 Admiralty Lane, Pembroke



Admiralty House Ballroom was photographed in 1990 as part of the Bermuda National Trust's Old House Survey.

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This is part of a series of architectural articles by the Bermuda National Trust that will highlight some of Bermuda's endangered historic buildings.

Admiralty House was built in the late 1700s and was a private residence until rented to the British Admiralty in 1810. Five years later it was purchased by the Bermuda Government and given to the Crown for the use of the Naval Commander-in-Chief. William Zuill in his 1946 book *Bermuda Journey* described Admiralty House as having a “pleasant informality having grown in a haphazard way from the nucleus of a simple Bermuda house”.

The Royal Gazette of 16 November 1897 reported on the new additions and much-needed improvements that included a new room “40' x 30' with a lofty coved ceiling” that was connected to the main house by a covered passageway. John Fletcher Motyer was the contractor and Arthur Douglas Hollis the carpenter. In 1899 a verandah was added around the ballroom. No early photographs have been found and there are very few accounts of entertainments held there.



The finely carved brackets on the ballroom verandah were the work of A.D. Hollis.

In 1939 at the outbreak of World War II the ballroom was divided into two halves by a 10-foot partition and used for a Staff Office and Cypher Office throughout the war. In 1957, shortly after the departure of Vice Admiral Sir John Eaton, six police officers moved into the main Admiralty House as volunteer caretakers. Others followed and this arrangement lasted for five years. The Bermuda Regiment used Admiralty House for their headquarters from 1962 to 1972 when they moved to Warwick Camp. With the exception of the ballroom, Admiralty House was purposely burned down on 24 January 1974. The area was declared a public park in 1974 after plans to build a hotel school on the grounds were defeated by public outcry.



The ballroom's gambrel roof was still intact in 2006 as were many of A.D. Hollis' wooden brackets.



The ballroom has had many uses, most notably as Peter Pan Nursery. In 2005 Government granted Bermuda Boxing Association permission to use the premises with promises to make the necessary renovations to the already deteriorating building. In 2021 the Government invited expressions of interest to refurbish the Grade 2 listed ballroom. Ethos Bermuda responded but their plans apparently fell apart and in 2022 another appeal for a developer was made.

Now, in October 2023, it has been announced that Age Concern will take over the renovation of the former ballroom in a public-private partnership with the Ministry of Public Works. This is terrific news. It will be a huge task to repair the building and Age Concern will be holding public consultations to see what the surrounding community would like to see in the new space.



The ballroom when photographed in July 2022.



A recent photograph of the interior of the ballroom taken by Akil Simmons of The Royal Gazette.

Sources: *The Royal Gazette* 15 Oct 2023, 20 Aug 2022, 6 Jan 2022, 22 Dec 2021, 1 May 2007; *Bermuda's Architectural Heritage Series Pembroke*; *The Andrew and the Onions*, Stranack; *Bermudian Magazine*, August 1946.