

The Weasel and Easel

Early in the spring of 1996 renovations began on one of the older buildings in the village, remembered by many as the "ice-cream" shop. Families had used part of it as a their home, a restaurant and boat builder were the most recent occupants. The owners moved and it had changed hands again.

While part of it functioned well as a private home a large area had been used the boat-builder's work shop and was in desperate need of repair. The inside had to be gutted, a new roof added, a pair of wonderful old doors rescued from the dump were donated which gave the freshly painted "Weasel and Easel" an interesting old-fashioned air. The second week in May they opened and public were welcomed to visit the Island's first co-operative artisan's gallery.

Amherst Island has many fine artists. Shirley Miller a water colourist became the president and moving force behind the new venture. Under her guidance members encouraged other artists using different mediums, potters, wood working, spinners (with yarn from Island fleece), knitters, doll makers and other crafts to fill the large sunny gallery with interesting and unique gifts and souvenirs. Most of the items on display are produced by Island residents but a few are accepted from an area defined as being in the Eastern Ontario Tourist Region and that is mainly Kingston.

Being part of the Loyalist Parkway, Amherst Island is gradually being discovered as an interesting out of the way spot to visit. The tourist facilities are growing with three bed and breakfasts and a an excellent restaurant and take out legendary for its pies. Although Islanders don't want to lose their tranquillity they are aware that times are changing and this year we have to face the problems of keeping the ferry service. Every tourist dollar will help towards this. The new businesses will, one hopes, help and bring new life to the once thriving village of Stella.

Submitted by Caroline Ackerman, 1997