

Dalglishes beautify Grafton in their own way

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Northumberland Today

GRAFTON — Peter and Camilla Dalglish do have an eye for the finer things, and the little village of Grafton has been the ultimate beneficiary.

For their complete transformation of five heritage buildings in the village, they were named the 2012 Alnwick-Haldimand Township citizens of the year. But all they did came as a result of pursuing their own passions.

That list would be quite long, probably topped by such ideals as heritage, landscaping, architecture and interior design. It's all on display at the big show-place of the five buildings, the Grafton Village Inn.

Although Dalglish worked in Toronto, they had a farm north of Grafton for more than 40 years. They were well aware of the once-grand stagecoach stop known as John Grover's Tavern on County Road 2 that had become an apartment house, then a gift shop and tea room, then just closed.

"When we bought the building, it was in terrible shape," Dalglish said.

His thought was to restore it and lease it out, but further investigation showed it was worse off than they had thought. It would take almost a complete gutting and several years of work to restore.

"The basic structure was kept. New windows were made in Port Hope in the old style. We tried to get manufactured windows, but they were very heavy. A man in Port Hope built these windows in the old style," Dalglish said.

There was no basement, so they had to hold up the building to dig one out. This is not unusual, he said. In the old days, buildings were often erected on a stone base.

The upstairs dormers were removed and replaced with skylights to provide a sunlit second-floor banquet room with massive wooden beams.

It reopened as a restaurant in the late 1990s and, by 2002, they had purchased the house imme-



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Located right on County Road 2 in Grafton, the Grafton Village Inn welcomes you. Your hosts are Peter and Camilla Dalglish.

side of the inn's parking lot. Called the Pumpkin House for the colour of its exterior finish, it sits well back from the street on a white picket-fenced lot. Over the course of two years, it got a new roof and was completely redone inside to make another bed-and-breakfast.

"There are two rooms and one bath upstairs, with a room and a sitting room downstairs," Dalglish said.

By this time, the grounds behind the inn that stretch between the two bed-and-breakfast buildings had been beautified with landscaping and the addition of a gazebo. Camilla Dalglish said it had become popular for weddings, with the bed-and-breakfast establishments offering needed accommodations.

It would become even more popular for weddings with the restoration of the old Methodist meeting hall immediately north of the Pumpkin House, whose grounds also abutted the parking

seemed destined to be its future. Dalglish took a friend, Toronto landscape architect Bill Greer, to look at the building — which interested him because of its roof and moulding.

"He said, 'I think it has gone too far to do anything with.' It came up for sale, and we bought it and started to take it apart," he said.

"The structure was great, with wonderful barn beams. We put in a small basement for heating.

"It didn't look like a church, but as we took out the inside walls, the shape of the windows was there. We decided to keep the barn beams and roof for the inside and insulate it on the outside. We had to replace the siding, so it really worked out much better than I thought."

"On the back wall, large windows offer a view westward of the grounds Dalglish has so lovingly groomed.

"It's nice to look into the woods and down the stream," he said.

Now called The Meeting Place,

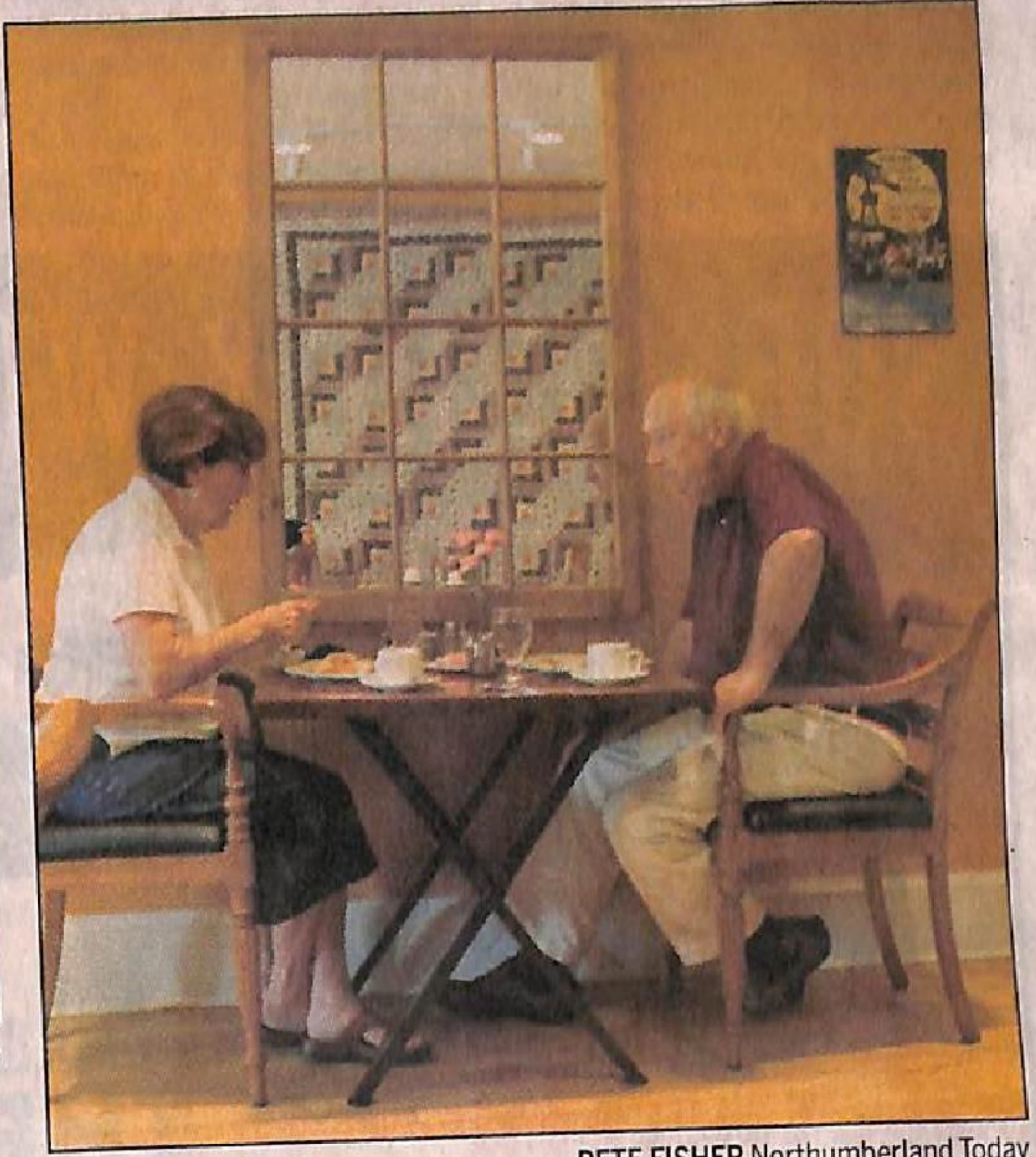
said. Camilla Dalglish is quick to give her husband credit, not only for the restoration work but for the furnishing and landscaping of each building.

"Peter does it so well. He was in the furniture and interior-design business for 45 years. He had the finest store in Toronto, Ridpath's on Yonge Street. It was over 110 years old," she said.

"I must say I'm in love with furniture," her husband agreed said, pointing out a table from Bali and a sideboard with an ultra-heavy real marble top that he spotted and decided was just right for his room.

Special touches abound in the bed-and-breakfast suites in the house across the creek, such as four-poster beds and heated towel racks. But the inn is the building people see the most, and Dalglish has scattered many styles of tables and chairs throughout its rooms.

Each setting is bound to be next to a fine piece of furniture,



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Dorothy and John Hudson enjoy breakfast in the country at the Grafton Village Inn.

happened to the portrait of a military man with red tunic and gold epaulets (a gift from Camilla's sister, because her husband didn't like it).

"That was the man in charge of looking after Napoleon when he was on the Isle of Elba," Dalglish said.

"We want to keep the buildings as authentic as possible, but bring them up to date with interesting things."

The modern flowered upholstery on the eight chairs ranged around a large round table, is an example, as is the whimsical wall piece that seems to be a hat and umbrella hung on a peg but it actually just a wooden carving.

"We like to make it interesting and pleasant for people to come in," he said.

Camilla Dalglish pointed out that the grounds have also become a wonderful place for

Monarch and white cabbage butterflies for Alex, while Camilla Dalglish picked watercress from the creekbank for a luncheon treat.

There are stepping stones across the creek but, for the convenience of their bed-and-breakfast guests, they want to put in a footbridge.

"We love the gardens around here, and we want to try to develop them a little bit more. Camilla's in the Garden Conservancy of America, so we travel all over for tours," Dalglish said.

Their passion for preservation does stem in some measure from their love of history. Dalglish finds Grafton an interesting area from that point of view.

His wife feels even more strongly.

"The Empire Loyalist theme should be used more in Grafton, because it was such a powerful