



## 1990: The demolition of the Dorchester Hotel

July 28, 2010

*Cambridge archivist Jim Quantrell takes our readers back for a glance at events which occurred 10, 15 and 20 years ago.*

### **20 YEARS AGO**

*Third week of August 1990*

An eight-man crew took only 12 hours to demolish a 142-year-old fixture on King Street at Fountain Street. The destruction of the Dorchester Hotel, formerly the Kress Hotel and before that the North American Hotel, left traffic in the area badly snarled and attracted a steady stream of onlookers who watched mattresses, light fixtures and other furnishings tumble out of the hotel as a large demolition crane tore at the building's frame. City council had approved the demolition of the former resort hotel two months previously fearing that the vacant structure was both a fire hazard and a temptation for vandals. The owner planned to build a commercial/residential condominium on the site.

The local Progressive Conservative riding association was a deeply divided group as the meeting at which the party's candidate for the expected provincial election was selected ended in bitter acrimony. Carl de Faria claimed a first round victory in the nomination battle receiving 273 of the 493 ballots cast. He had submitted 500 new riding memberships minutes before the deadline to enter new memberships passed and it was at least partially on the strength of these new members that de Faria won the nomination vote. The unsuccessful candidates also brought a number of new members into the organization prior to the vote but not in the same numbers as de Faria and they were convinced there were some irregularities in the process by which de Faria's new memberships were arranged. Claiming the election was "bought" and was not a "democratic" result the unsuccessful candidates refused to join de Faria on the post-election stage and refused to work for de Faria's campaign in the forthcoming provincial election. For his part, de Faria denied any wrong doing and was supported by the local riding association president who confirmed the new memberships were obtained legally.

### **15 YEARS AGO**

*Third week of August 1995*

A city environmental activist was getting only grief from city officials after she built a garden in the boulevard in front of her house. Noting that the boulevard had been just dirt and weeds after a local utility company ripped it up to install services to her house, she claimed that even if it was a technical violation of a city bylaw it was certainly a marked improvement over what had been there. City officials, while admitting the homeowner had not been inaccurate in her description, did not agree with her solution. The city councillor representing her ward got involved after receiving "over a half dozen" complaints from neighbours. He was vociferous in his opposition to the garden and provided city officials with "directions to take the damn things (flowers and rocks) out one way or another." The city's bylaw enforcement officer visited and though he informed her of the bylaw that prohibited "fouling" or other alteration of city property including boulevards, he didn't immediately lay charges.

### **10 YEARS AGO**

*Third week of August 2000*

Cambridge council voted to create a task force to review recommendations on council remuneration made in a city report. At the time councillors received \$14,500 plus an additional \$13,088 if they also served as regional councillors. The mayor received \$47,000 plus the same \$13,088 for serving on regional council. The report recommended a modest bump in pay to bring the mayor's salary up to \$50,000 a year and each councillor's remuneration to \$18,000 annually. The increase was deemed appropriate in that with the reduced size of the new council, fewer councillors would be expected to perform the same responsibilities as the then current 10-member council.

The modified two-tier model of regional government reform supported by Cambridge and Waterloo councils suffered an 11-10 vote defeat at regional council. In the view of one Cambridge councillor, this move "defeated the best alternative a super city and going it alone". Another city councillor noted, "The vote was taken. The die

is cast. And regional reform has ground to a halt. We've got to decide for ourselves where we want to take it." One alternative still under consideration, at least around the city council table, was the option for Cambridge to go it alone. For that to happen, however, the city must meet all the criteria set out by the province for regional reform as well as "address the concerns of community identity, economic impact and social issues".

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