



1990: Dorchester Hotel's fate sealed

Jim Quantrell, At a Glance

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

20 YEARS AGO: First week of April 1990

Faced with renewed questions about health and the environmental hazards of pesticides, civic officials from across Waterloo Region set up a special task force to educate the public on the benefits of using chemical weed killers to maintain public property. The task force was to distribute brochures to schools and government buildings describing "some simple to understand facts about healthy grass". The move came a week after a Guelph-based lobby group called for a one-year moratorium on pesticide spraying by government bodies to give independent researchers time to determine its effect on human health and the environment.

After months of speculation, officials at Conestoga College confirmed that the college would indeed be giving up its main Cambridge building at 1305 Bishop St. But rather than moving out of the city, would be relocating in a commercial plaza just two blocks away. According to a college spokesperson, all the courses offered at the old site and most of the administrative functions would be moved to the new location. At the time, there were 97 students at the Cambridge campus that had a capacity of 100 students.

The fate of the Dorchester Hotel was sealed when the city's Planning and Development Committee turned down an application from the city's Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee to designate the Preston landmark as a heritage building. The former Kress Hotel had stood at the corner of King and Fountain streets for well over 100 years, but had recently fallen into complete disrepair and was considered a fire hazard. The crippling costs of refurbishing the building had the designation been granted were a major factor in council's refusal to designate.

Cambridge entered the bidding war with Kitchener and Waterloo to become the host city for a new Waterloo Regional headquarters building. Reports indicated that council had agreed to donate more than \$1-million worth of city-owned industrial land north of Highway 401 in an attempt to win the headquarters project. The previous month regional councillors had rejected both a \$71-million proposal to build in Waterloo and a \$78-million proposal to build in Kitchener. Instead they had opted to scatter facilities around the region by renovating an existing structure in Kitchener for the social services department, building a health department facility in Waterloo and erecting a main administrative centre and council chamber on Maple Grove Road in Cambridge.

15 YEARS AGO - First week of April 1995

The United Kingdom Club was ready to take the city to court if necessary to rectify its standing within Cambridge's International Village. A club spokesperson claimed that his club was the victim of "selective discrimination" by the city. In the 1980's the United Kingdom Club, the Islamic Centre and the Armenian Club had all purchased property in the International Village under an agreement that stipulated that regular religious services could not be held in buildings within the village. Later the Islamic Centre was allowed to establish a mosque in its facility and thereby became tax exempt. This drew protests from Armenian Club representatives who claimed that they too wished to establish a church. Council bowed to the request and the Armenian Club also gained tax-exempt status. That left the United Kingdom Club as the only ethnic club in the village still paying taxes.

Two members of the city's Contaminated Sites Advisory Committee who represented the environmental community resigned in frustration at what they perceived as the committee's inability to "advise" anyone and over the extremely limited impact of the environmentalists on the decision making process. The committee's effectiveness as an independent advisory committee was called into question by the practice of the companies involved in the contamination issues continuing to meet in private with Ministry of Environment officials to discuss the latest technical information. The resigning members wondered how the committee could advise when they were not privy to the latest information. Ironically it was the lobbying of local environmental groups that had led to the establishment of the committee in the first place. The original group that had been set up to

monitor the cleanup at two city industrial sites had dissolved amid complaints by environmental representatives of too much involvement by officials of companies that had been responsible for the chemical contamination. Their complaints and petition to council had led to the establishment of the Contaminate Sites Advisory Committee to monitor the cleanup procedures.

10 YEARS AGO - First week of April 2000

The Cambridge Winter Hawks won their first Jr. B championship. The club took the Midwestern Ontario crown with a 7-3 win over the Owen Sound Greys in a six-game final series. The win gave the Winter Hawks the right to challenge for the Ontario title in the Sutherland Cup round. Joining the Winter Hawks in the Sutherland Cup tournament were Chatham and St. Catharines. In other hockey news, the Cambridge Hornets ended their first season back in the Senior AAA fold on a losing note with double losses in a best-of-three series for the Bolton Cup. The team had posted an impressive 27-1-2 record in the regular and an 8-0 sweep of two opponents prior to the Bolton Cup.

Officials at Cambridge's Toyota manufacturing facility announced another investment of \$650-million in the Fountain Street plant as it geared up to produce the Lexus RX 300 series sports utility vehicle. In the long term, 300 new jobs were to be created at the Cambridge plant, although company officials emphasized that hiring would not take place for some time.

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