

Memory Lane

EXPLORE THE PAST OF DOWNTOWN HAMILTON

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The Royal Connaught

The Royal Connaught Hotel is a 13-storey building standing 50 metres tall. It was erected on the site of the former Waldorf Hotel by Harry Frost of Buffalo, New York in 1914 for a cost of \$1 million. The name for the hotel was chosen by A.E. Richards, a 12-year-old Hamilton schoolboy, as the Duke of Connaught had laid the cornerstone in 1914. The hotel soon became the hub of Hamilton's social and commercial life. His Royal Highness, the Duke of Connaught, the then-Governor-General of Canada, turned the sod in May, 1914, and the building was formally opened by Sir John Hendrie, a Hamilton citizen and Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario, in June of 1916.

Designed by Essenwein and Johnson of Buffalo in association with the Hamilton firm of A.W. Peene, the hotel was built in the Edwardian Classical style characterized by its large, rounded windows on the first floor, the pedimented windows on the third, eleventh and twelfth floors, and the prominent, overhanging cornice. The hotel featured 244 rooms with all marbled floor baths and a 1500 capacity banquet hall. The ballroom and rooftop restaurant served as a prime venue for international entertainers featuring an amazing view of the Niagara Escarpment and Lake Ontario. The west tower, designed by the well-known Hamilton firm of Hutton and Souter, was added in 1930-31. United Hotels Company, who owned the property at the time, sold in the 1930s. By 1931 the new owner had added and additional 200 rooms and turned the ground floors into offices and shops.



The Royal Connaught entrance in 1976

The Connaught Hotel was the primary hotel facility in Downtown Hamilton for over 60 years, during which time it hosted numerous major dignitaries. After the 1990's the hotel was sold multiple times, and saw many financial struggles. The Connaught officially closed in 2004. In 2014 Spallacci Group and Valery Homes restored and renovated the hotel into beautiful condos with the lobby rejuvenated and paying homage to its original design. Below you will find images of the hotel as well as the previous building that once stood at this location.

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The Royal Connaught ...continued



The Royal Connaught as it looked before its expansion. Next to the hotel is the W.E. Sanford building before it was demolished and the Royal Connaught expanded to John St.



July 1, 1946 - The Governor-General of Canada Field Marshal Viscount Alexander of Tunis, in the top hat, and Mayor Samuel Lawrence, in the white hat, entering the Royal Connaught Hotel. Hamilton was incorporated as a city on June 9, 1846 and celebrated its Centennial July 1 to July 6, 1946. There were various celebrations and activities throughout the city. There was a large fireworks display from the mountain brow. The Miss Canada pageant was held in Hamilton during that week. There was a three hour parade with floats, bands and marchers that wound its way through the downtown core.



Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau and wife Margaret at the Royal Connaught in 1971.



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Sanford & McInnes Company at the south-east corner of King and John Streets, 1870s

The Sanford & McInnes Company predated the W.E. Sanford building at the same location. This company was one of the largest clothing manufacturers in Canada in the late 19th century. Hamilton businessman and manufacturer W.E. Sanford teamed up with local dry goods wholesaler Alexander McInnes in 1862 to produce ready-made clothes. By 1887, Sanford had assumed full control, renaming it the W.E. Sanford Manufacturing Company.

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The Royal Connaught ...continued



The W.E. Sanford building at the corner of King St. and John St. before the Royal Connaught Hotel was built.



The Waldorf Hotel, circa 1914 and just prior to demolition. The Anglo-American Hotel was opened in 1854 in anticipation of the arrival of the Great Western Railway in Hamilton. When the Anglo-American Hotel declared bankruptcy in 1861, the building was converted into the Wesleyan Female College, an exclusive international school for the education of women. After the Wesleyan Ladies College closed in 1898, the building was reconverted into the Waldorf Hotel. The Waldorf Hotel in turn closed in 1913 and The Royal Connaught Hotel was constructed on the site.



The Royal Connaught room in 1941.

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A view of the lobby in 1946.

The Royal Connaught ...continued



The parking lot at this location once housed the Canada Business College (1950-1960) and ground floor commercial space before the building was demolished.



A view of the side of the building at the intersection of King St. and Catherine St. in 1960. The view from here is quite similar today.



By the 1960s this building beside the hotel at King and Catharine Streets was demolished and became a parking lot.