

BARRIE'S

GRAND HOTEL

WALKING TOUR

ROYAL HOTEL
94 Dunlop St. W.



WELLINGTON HOTEL
4 Dunlop St. W.



VESPERA HOUSE HOTEL
52 Bayfield St.



HOTEL SIMCOE
31 Bayfield St.



QUEEN'S HOTEL
94 Dunlop St. E.



AMERICAN HOTEL
72 Collier St.



CLARKSON HOUSE
130 Dunlop St. E.



VICTORIA HOTEL
37 Mulcaster St.



THE

HOTEL SIMCOE

NOW WITH 46 GUEST ROOMS!

EST. 1856

Our Grand Hotel Tour begins at Five Points, where the Simcoe Hotel has stood for nearly 150 years.

For some, it's the colour of clay and for others, the colour of mud. Either way, the Simcoe has been at the centre of the city so long, it seems as if it grew from the earth itself. The hotel was felled by fire in February 1876, but was rebuilt by December. Beams in the basement are still blackened today after being licked by flame nearly 1.5 centuries ago.

Perhaps unfairly, the Hotel Simcoe has always had a reputation for roughness. But the tavern's surly reputation wasn't enough to stop Sir John A. Macdonald himself from enjoying the odd drink within its cozy confines.

31 BAYFIELD STREET

AT THE HEART OF BARRIE'S FIVE POINTS AND WITH A VIEW OF THE LAKE



THE

HOTEL SIMCOE

NOW WITH 46 GUEST ROOMS!

EST. 1856

June 15, 1878

My dear D'Alton,

I extend my deepest and most sincere apologies for failing to return last night, and leaving so swiftly again for Kingston. Unfortunately, Mrs. Bernard was at my throat again, and so I retreated to the Hotel Simcoe for a splash and before long required somewhere to rest my weary old head.

While we've shared many a drink within these walls, I may not return next I visit. A sort of ghastly sprite visited me in the night, I swear it. A woman, I think. Downstairs at the bar, a pair of lumberjacks were discussing the death of a lonely lass by the name of Elizabeth Meyer, who was found frozen and beaten on the steps of this place in 1872. And surely you remember when it burned a couple years back in February '76, could it be by coincidence? I think not.

I still shiver when I see the ashen beams below the bar and wonder what my constituents would think, to see their fearless leader running from the flames and plunging into Kempenfeldt Bay in his night cap...

Yours faithfully,
John

31 BAYFIELD STREET

AT THE HEART OF BARRIE'S FIVE POINTS AND WITH A VIEW OF THE LAKE



W. CUBITT-NICHOLS

CLARKSON HOUSE.

Our Grand Hotel Tour has us marching further east, to the northeast corner of Dunlop and Mulcaster Streets, where the Clarkson House stands. Today, The Artisan Boutique occupies much of the ground floor, while newly renovated apartments can be found above.

Once upon a time, those were hotel suites, one of which was home to a man named Thomas Baggs for 11 years. The English war veteran and railroad worker had purchased and furnished a house on John Street but lived at the Clarkson until Christmas Day 1927. On that morning, innkeeper Mr. Cubitt-Nicholls found his boarder sick and bedridden and called for a doctor, who wished to send Baggs to Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre. Baggs refused and by the next day, he was dead. His story was published in the Northern Advance, who tried to track down Baggs' family. Our own Mary Harris followed up on that lead in a story for BarrieToday.com, which you can read here. The Clarkson's namesake, Joshua Clarkson, was once hotelier at the Commercial Hotel and in 1864 joined his fellow Barrie innkeepers in raising the price of a glass of liquor to five cents, to combat a new duty that had been imposed. In 1871, he branched out and launched the Clarkson House.

Did you spend more than five cents at Tiff's, or the Clarkson Pub over the years?

130 DUNLOP STREET EAST.



W. CUBITT-NICHOLS
CLARKSON HOUSE.

December 25, 1927

Dearest Alfred,

This may be the last I write you, and if it is, may I say I've missed you dearly since you departed wearing your uniform a dozen years back. I woke up this morning and it was Christmas. I don't expect I'll wake to see the fresh fallen snow lining my sill on Boxing Day. I hope your wife is well; perhaps I'm even a clueless uncle by now.

The aroma of gravies and cranberries and dressing weren't enough to draw me from my bed this morning, and when Mr. Cubitt-Nichols, the innkeeper here at the Clarkson, came to fetch me for lunch, I had nodded off again. Shaking me from my slumber, he said my face had achieved a whiter shade of pale and he sent the busboy off to ring Dr. Turnbull. The good doc was about to arrange for a bed at the Royal Victoria, but I told him to let the medics rest; for it's Christmas after all. He's gone home now, and he's left some water and drug at my bedside, but I know this is the end. I've carried the hot sun on my shoulders in Bangalore and Gibraltar, but I've never known a fever like this.

Yours,
Thomas

130 DUNLOP SREET EAST.



FROM THE
QUEEN'S HOTEL
BARRIE, ONT.



Our Grand Hotel Tour takes us down Dunlop Street East, to a place where Barrie residents young and old have flocked for years.

But what if we told you that the Queen's wasn't always the Queen's?

Take a look at that black-and-white photo. See the Queen's hotel sign? It's likely a little further east than you were expecting.

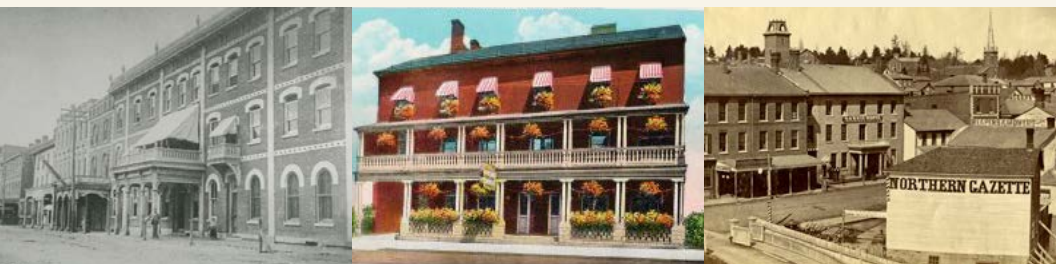
The original Queen's burned in 1915, leaving a charred mess of cinder until nearly a decade later, when the property became the site of a Pfaff automotive dealership, Eaton's store and bowling academy. That lot also burned in 1966, leaving the gap in the traditional roofline on the north side of Dunlop, still there today.

To picture the old Queen's take a peek west of RIPE Juicery, where Valiant's Barrie stands. Look at the gap in the roofline, and picture a large, three-story, bricked hotel.

The Queen's of today was once known as the Barrie Hotel, and took the name in 1920, a few years after its competitor burned down. What memories do you have of the Queen's?



94 DUNLOP SREET EAST



FROM THE
QUEEN'S HOTEL
BARRIE, ONT.



September 23, 1927

Darling,

Are you behaving? It was a long ride up to Barrie, and I was really quite confused upon walking from the station, past the post office and finding my room at the Queen's this evening. For this Queen's is not the hotel of the same name at which I laid my head barely more than a decade ago, last I visited this quaint town. As it turns out, this hotel was once called the Barrie Hotel, and the Queen's sat a few doors to the east on the same street. I've since learned that that hotel - the former Queen's, that is - burned to the ground in February 1915 and its charred remains, well, remained, for nearly 10 years before council purchased it. They sold it to a fellow named Livingston who has Pfaff selling fine motorcars from the east side of the lot, and Eaton has bought up the neighbouring building from which he sells his wares.

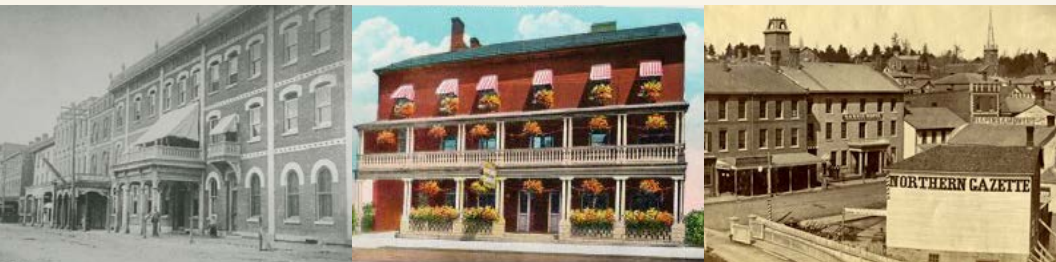
I'll write you again before I depart for destinations north, but tonight I will fancy a drink upon the second-floor verandah, which I'm told was a well-advertised addition only a few years ago.

Best,

A travelling salesman



94 DUNLOP SREET EAST



THE
VICTORIA HOTEL
SINCE 1868

Up the hill we go on our Grand Hotel Tour, to the southeast corner of Mulcaster and Collier Streets, the former site of the Victoria Hotel! This establishment, first advertised in 1868, once sat right across the street from Barrie's market building and city hall, making it a popular destination for travelling merchants. Its heyday likely came in the late 1870s when it received a facelift, including the addition of covered verandahs and decorative accents, coming at the same time as improvements to the market building.

The Victoria's most infamous guest also happens to be its former innkeeper, Michael J. Brennan, who ran the hotel in the 1870s and 80s. In 1882, Brennan even took out an ad in the Northern Advance in 1882 to thank the Barrie court for entrusting the housing and feeding of the jury of a murder trial to his establishment.

By the end of the century, however, Brennan had fallen on hard times and found himself the defendant in one of the city's most widely publicized cases: the murder of John Strathy. On the very day he killed Strathy, Brennan lodged at the Victoria Hotel, even returning to the hotel's tavern for a drink before coolly confessing his deed to a local constable outside. It's a fascinating and complex story, covered by our own Mary Harris here.

MULCASTER AND COLLIER STREETS



THE
VICTORIA HOTEL
SINCE 1868

February 3, 1896

John,

As I write, I'm only a few minutes from boarding the train and departing south for the city. But rest assured; while the snow remains on the ground, I will return to Barrie. I'll be carrying my revolver next time around, and should you refuse to help me reunite with Mary and the children, I'll be forced to point it in your direction. For months you've turned me away, and a man can only endure so much.

When I put down the bottle, and look into the glass, I see your face. When I reach into my pockets and come up penniless, I can hear your laughter. When I ask my friends where my wife has gone, they keep repeating your name.

Michael J. Brennan

MULCASTER AND COLLIER STREETS



• MANSION HOUSE •

EST. 1874

Last stop on the Grand Hotel Tour, in honour of the fourth anniversary of barriearchive.ca! To find a bed at this hotel, we walk across the Market to the steps of the Mansion House on the northwest corner of Mulcaster and Collier Streets. OK, some of you might know this hotel as the American. Or better yet, does the 'Yank' ring a bell?

Built in 1874, the Mansion House was the site of a tragedy only three years later in March 1877, when a man was found suffering head injuries on the sidewalk outside. When the innkeeper, William Brett, was called out to carry the man inside, he recognized him as an acquaintance named James Curran Morrow. Morrow, a Simcoe County clerk and son of a Justice of the Peace, had entered the hotel only a few hours earlier after returning to town from a long voyage, and rested his head in Brett's personal living quarters. It is believed that sometime before midnight, when he was found, Morrow had accidentally walked out a second-storey door, where a balcony had yet to be built. While lying on the street, Morrow had even been robbed of his gold pocketwatch. The 36-year-old suffered for another day before he died, and his watch was found a block away near Owen Street about a month later.

Despite the tragedy, more than a century of merriment would follow at the American Hotel. Got any happier stories to share about the Yank?



72 COLLIER ST., ACROSS FROM THE MARKET

UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT



• MANSION HOUSE •

EST. 1874

March 18, 1877

Dear Justice David Morrow,

It is with great regret that I write to share my sympathies with you and yours, following the untimely passing of your son, James Curran. When I reflect upon that fateful evening, I still find myself reaching deep for answers, only to return empty handed. This is my best recollection of last night's events:

Your son arrived at the Mansion House shortly before 8 o'clock. His head was weary and his eyelids heavy, following a long journey by carriage from well out of town, and he requested use of my living quarters, to which I obliged. For several hours, I tended to the needs of guests, before retiring to the sitting room on the ground floor to read a book. I had been sitting only a few minutes, when Mr. Speers, a boarder from Guelph, rushed into the room in a frenzy. Speers had found your son squirming and groaning on the sidewalk outside, only a few feet from the front steps. I called for Dr. Wells and he arrived just past midnight, but the damage had been done. I regret that I have no more to share, but your son's death remains a deeply troubling mystery.

Sincerely,

William Brett, hotelier



72 COLLIER ST., ACROSS FROM THE MARKET

UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT



BARRIE'S

GRAND HOTEL

WALKING TOUR

Royal Hotel, 94 Dunlop St. W.

It was about 1875 when the Royal Hotel opened. The wild times of Barrie in the 1870s and 1880s were winding down and the hotel was catering more to summer tourists and families. By the early 1900s it was known as the King Edward Hotel. A newspaper reported in 1908:

“Ideally located, just far enough away from the central business section to be removed from excessive, and yet sufficiently close for business purposes, on the corner of Toronto and Elizabeth Streets, stand the King Edward Hotel, one of the most popular hotels in Barrie. It occupies a handsome brick building with wide pleasant verandahs. The house is extremely well furnished throughout with a view to comfort and home-like ease. There are sixteen bed-rooms and these are attractive in their appointments, cozy in winter time and cool in summer. The parlours are handsomely furnished, in fact the entire establishment is neat, clean and comfortable. Below stairs, the office is fitted with an eye to the convenience of the public. The dining room which seat fifty people, is pleasant and bright with an enviable reputation for the excellence of its cuisine and service. The bar is stocked with the choicest of imported and domestic wines and liquors and the finest brands of tobaccos and cigars.

This hotel was originally known as the Royal, but on passing into the hands of Mr. King some years ago, from whom the present proprietor purchased it a year ago, it was renamed the King Edward. Mr. Fraser, has only been in Canada about five years. He is a native of Scotland and on his arrival in this country settled in Halifax, Nova Scotia, coming to Barrie two years ago.”

Read our article about the Royal Hotel here.



BARRIE'S

GRAND HOTEL

WALKING TOUR

Wellington Hotel, 4 Dunlop St. W.

The first hotel at this location was built about 1841, a frame and roughcast plaster building that was later enlarged and known as the Summersett Hotel. It was ultimately destroyed in an 1876 fire and rebuilt as the brick hotel most people would recall. It also was destroyed by fire in 2007. But in better days, a periodical from about 1910 described the Wellington Hotel this way:

“This delightful hotel is centrally located, commanding a view of the very heart of the business section. The hotel which is a splendid type of hotel architecture is a substantial structure of brick, three stories in height. It is illuminated with electricity, heated by steam, has a splendid electric bell system, and all modern conveniences. The main entrance leads into a handsomely fitted office. On the same floor are the dining room and sample rooms. The former seats 100 guests, and is prettily decorated, its fitting being characterized by a certain quiet elegance. The sample rooms are large, and are the Mecca of the bulk of the travelling salesmen. The bar which is at some distance from the dining room and office, is admirably appointed and stocked with the finest wines and liquors, domestic and imported. The house throughout is beautifully decorated, in fact nothing has been left undone to make it one of the most homelike and inviting in Northern Ontario. Mr. (Hunter) Kennedy is the genial and experienced proprietor. Under his management the house has been brought a high state of efficiency and comfort. During his proprietorship, he has made many important improvements, enlarging the dining room, removing the bar from the front to the rear corner and building a new kitchen, besides installing marble lavatories. He is ably assisted in the management of the house by his son, Mr. H Kennedy.

Read more about the Five Points fires here.



BARRIE'S

GRAND HOTEL

WALKING TOUR

Vespra House Hotel, 52 Bayfield St.

Downtown Barrie was crowded with hotels in the mid-to-late-1800s and about 1878, another emerged – the Vespra House Hotel, hosted by Mr. Stritch on Bayfield Street, just north of the Wellington Hotel.

Described about 1911 as “One of Barrie’s Popular Hostelries”, the Vespra Hotel received high marks by the press:

“With the great army of commercial men, most expert and censorious critics, the hotel is looked upon as one of the best barometers indicative of the character of any community, and it is a patent fact that the first class hotel and second class city are never found closely allied. One of the popular hotels of Barrie is the Vespra House. This is located centrally, occupying an attractive three story brick building, conveniently situated as regards the railroad stations, the banks, post office, places of amusement and the business centre. It is heated by the hot water system, is lighted by electricity and is fitted with all modern conveniences. The dining room is a model of attractiveness and the best of everything the market affords, prepared by skilled chefs, is served by attentive waiters. In connection is a handsome bar, well stocked and in charge of skilled chemists. There are also ample accommodations for stabling and livery. Mr. William Hamilton, the present proprietor, took control in 1909, succeeding E. White. He is one of the best-known hotel men of Barrie, a royal host and all round good fellow and has a host of personal friends.

Read more about the Vespra Hotel [here](#).

