



THE GLOBE HOTEL WITH A VIEW OF THE MOUNTAIN (1865-2012)

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For well over 150 years, the north-east corner of Hurontario and Huron Streets in downtown Collingwood was the site of a hotel. The original wooden building in that location is variously said either to have burned down (a frequent occurrence in the mid-19th century when buildings were lit with open flames and horse stables filled with hay and straw abounded) or to have been demolished by Irish innkeeper John Rowland (1826-1897) whereupon he replaced it in 1865 with a brick hotel running in a north-south direction facing onto Hurontario St. but not extending as far as the corner of Huron St. Over a period of three decades up to 1895, the building was expanded in stages to its final footprint, most of which stretched along Huron St. It was known from 1865 as the Globe Hotel. Immediately east of the Globe was another hotel, a very narrow building, only three windows wide, sandwiched in between the Globe Hotel and the massive Shipyard Machine Shop. This narrow hotel was known as the Manitoba House and in the early 1870's was operated by Irish-born Henry Edgar Nolan (1837-1878), the husband of my great-grandmother O'Brien's sister. Many years later,

the Manitoba House was demolished and the lot became a hydro substation for the Collingwood Shipyard. The Manitoba House can be seen in the photo on page 98 in Christine Cowley's book, *Butchers, Bakers & Building The Lakers*.

In the 1860's Hurontario St. extended beyond the intersection of Huron/First St. to the water's edge long before much landfill created what would eventually become the site of the Collingwood Shipyard. The 1875 drawing *Bird's Eye View of Collingwood* shows Hurontario St. extending some distance beyond the aforementioned corner and the original 1865 3-storey portion of the Globe Hotel is indicated as having a balcony above the ground floor along its entire length of six windows. For those of you who remember the hotel as it was in the 1970's, this north-south original part of the building relates to what were known in the '70's as the "Ladies & Escorts" and "Men's" Beverage Rooms. The portion of the building that contained "The Captain's Room" Lounge right at the corner of Huron St. was added in 1872. An early photo shows the Hurontario St. view of the building with the balcony extending along the original part of the building. The same photo shows the 1872 addition with no balcony, the length of three extra windows on the Hurontario St. side coming right out to the corner of Huron St. and extending along Huron St. by a length of five windows, while the rest of the building as we knew it was not yet built. In this photo there are a number of mature trees reaching above the roofline of the building. An empty space can be seen between the extent of the hotel at that time and the west wall of the Manitoba House. The entire Globe Hotel in this photo had a north-south footprint.

It was in the empty space to the east of this north-south footprint that, in 1895, a major addition was added, designed by famed Collingwood

architect Fred T. Hodgson. This included the main entrance with the grand staircase, iron balconies at the second and third floor levels over the main entrance and the 3-storey balance of the building extending eastward right to the western wall of the Manitoba House.

The Globe Hotel was originally built for and owned by the family of John Rowland and the property remained in the ownership of that family and their descendants for approximately 80 years, even when the hotel's business was operated by others. For example, in July 1903, a man named John L. Scholes, a 24-year-old champion boxer, became the proprietor and this lasted until 1919 when he was overcome by his debts and his creditors took over. The management of the building reverted to the Rowland family who, according to some accounts, retained ownership of the property up into the mid 1940's.

As documented by Scotty Carmichael in the Collingwood history book *Reflections* (pg. 114) the Globe Hotel, during the time it was managed by Scholes, was a popular hangout for famous sportsmen in the early 1900's and there was "a story in every room". Characters who stopped in and/or stayed at the Globe included heavyweight boxing champions, the great John L. Sullivan among them, scullers, long distance runners, "hockey, lacrosse, and baseball players and fans and followers of harness racing".

Like the other hotels in town in the 19th and early 20th Centuries, the Globe Hotel had a horse-drawn coach that picked up passengers at the (then) Grand Trunk railway station and at the wharf. Dick Ward who helped out on the front desk at the Mt. View in the 1970's remembered the various coaches lined up at the railway station. The drivers would call out in an enthusiastic voice "Arlington Hotel!", "Grand Central

Hotel!", "Tremont House!", while the driver from the Globe said in a monotone voice, "Globe". This coach can be seen in the 1890's photo on page 107 of *Butchers, Bakers & Building The Lakers*.

The hotel also had a "Salesman's Sample Room" where travelling salesmen would set up their wares in the hope that the townspeople would buy their products. One lady for whom I tuned a piano in Collingwood in the 1970's said that her family piano was sold from that sample room at the Globe Hotel.

Captain Alexander McDougall (1845-1923) of Duluth, Minnesota, the inventor of a ship called a "Whaleback", was one of the movers and shakers that turned the Queen's Drydock into the Collingwood Shipbuilding Company Ltd. at the turn of the 20th Century. He also opened a steel shipbuilding yard in Kingston as a branch of the Collingwood yard and frequently travelled between Duluth, Collingwood and Kingston. When in Collingwood he stayed at the Globe Hotel in a room overlooking the Shipyard. Other times, frequent letters to him in Duluth from the Shipyard Manager John S. Leitch kept him informed.

From the early 1950's the hotel was owned by British-born Joseph (1898-1970) and Alice Wheeler. It was sold to them on October 2, 1951, the purchase price being \$9500.00. The Wheelers were active in operating the Globe Hotel much earlier than this, although not as owners of the property. Their son, Charlie Wheeler, told me in the early 1970's that his parents, when they first came to Collingwood, were stationed a block east down Huron St. at the Queen's Hotel (corner of Ste. Marie St., now The Shipyards Medical Arts Centre) in the mid 1930's. He said he came to visit them in 1936 from his hometown

of Peterborough which took an entire day on the train. Arriving in Collingwood at night and making his way the short distance from the CNR Station to the Queen's Hotel in the dark under 40-watt bulb street lights, he was appalled at the run-down condition of the Queen's Hotel that his parents were running. He said that after a few years (i.e. by about 1940), they took over running the Globe Hotel as proprietors (but not as owners of the building). Joe and Alice Wheeler lived in an apartment on the second floor on the Hurontario/Huron St. corner of the building (the 1872 addition) above the space that would eventually become The Captain's Room. A number of staff members lived in the hotel as well.

The change of name of the hotel from "Globe" to "Mountain View" is attributed to Joe Wheeler who, apparently, one day walked out onto the balcony and saw the view of the Blue Mountain and a light bulb went on in his head, and thus was born the name of the building for the rest of its life, "The Mountain View Hotel"—a new owner and a new name. Most people called it "The Mt. View". The association of the name Globe Hotel with the Rowland family was now history.

By the late 1950's when Collingwood was still a "Dry" town, i.e. no bars (although there was a Liquor Control Board of Ontario ["LCBO"] store on the main street and a Brewer's Warehouse beer store on Simcoe St.), there was agitation to get with the times and to have cocktail lounges, beverage rooms, and restaurants that could legally sell alcohol with meals. The four hotels in town, the Dorchester, Arlington, Tremont and Mt. View wanted to get in on this. A vote was held and passed, turning Collingwood into a "Wet" town. As one can learn from the series of books by Larry D. Cotton titled *Whisky & Wickedness*, there was plenty of drinking going on in Collingwood over the years

whether it was legal or not. Every community has its stories of “bootlegging” and of people filling drug store prescriptions for alcohol “for medicinal purposes”. The Mt. View had its share of stories too.

The passing of this momentous vote resulted in new drinking establishments. The Tremont Hotel built a new addition on the west side of the original building and called it The Starlite Room (long since demolished and replaced with the Tremont Cafe). The other three hotels converted already existing space into beverage rooms and cocktail lounges. At the Mt. View, Joe Wheeler transferred ownership of the property to his wife Alice, his son Charlie, and to his daughter Veronica J. Bishop of Toronto on April 29, 1960. The Liquor Licence posted in the Mt. View was in the names of Charles Wheeler and Mrs. Veronica J. Bishop. It is no secret that the Liquor Licenses were responsible for the bulk of the business and profit in these hotels. There were rooms for rent, coffee shops and dining rooms in the hotels, of course, but the sale of alcohol—remember, the stock is not perishable as is food—was the real money maker. Much of what could and could not be done to the building and the business was under the authority of the Liquor Licence. It was said sarcastically that you couldn’t change a toilet seat without first getting the permission of the Liquor Inspector.

In the 1970’s the cost for a room for the night at the Mt. View was \$6.00 and no, that amount is not a typo. I used to listen to front desk clerk Lawrence Henry Logan (“Logie”) tell people about the rooms which came with a bed, a sink (he called it a “wash bowl”) and a shower, but no TV or phone, and the common toilet was “out in the hall” as was customary in many 19th Century hotels. One year, in keeping with the rising cost of living, the price of a room was increased

to \$7.00 a night. A sign painter who could not spell produced a sign that was posted on the rounded corner of the wall at the front desk with an arrow pointing down the hallway to the “Dinning Lounge” that was run by Beth and Glenn Trott.

Fifty years ago I started to play piano in the Mt. View Hotel. The instrument was a rare 1905 Heintzman & Co. model “J” upright that had belonged to Maisie Northcote, the lady that my parents rented an apartment from in her home on Maple St. for about five years after they were married in 1941.

In the Beverage Room at the Mt. View I played to middle-aged and retired summer cottagers—people from my parents’ generation—some from as far away as Guelph, St. Catharines, Brantford, and Toronto. In the winter we were packed to the door with skiers in the days before there were liquor licences up at Blue Mountain—so packed in fact, that Bryce Smith, one of the desk clerks who lived in the building, was stationed at the Beverage Room door to keep people out. Every St. Patrick’s Day there was an Irish band that played at the Mt. View.

On Wednesday nights there was a ladies bowling group who bowled at Larry Smith’s Crescent Alleys at 168 Hurontario St., between 3rd and 4th Streets. This group numbered about three dozen. Of that group, about a dozen of them including Mary Morrish, Glenna McLeod (both neighbours of mine), Jean Elyea, Fran Stewart, Onalee Smith (the wife of Larry Smith who owned the bowling alley), Helen Gallagher and others I did not know by name, came to the Mt. View after bowling. Some of these ladies joined a weight loss program and every Wednesday evening while hoisting glasses of calorie-laden draft beer

they would sing their theme song while I played for them. The song was to the tune of the wartime song *Bless 'Em All* composed in 1917 during the First World War, but popularized during the Second World War by singer Vera Lynn. The calorie counting ladies sang the following:

Count them all,

Count them all,

Each calorie no matter how small,

Count every morsel and bite that you eat,

What you gain on a Sunday you'll lose in the week,

So we're saying goodbye to them all,

As onto the weigh scales we crawl,

Take a load off your bunions with carrots and onions,

So come on my gals count them all!

One of their favourite songs was the Chiquita Banana jingle. This has a Latin beat, and, for those who don't remember it, multiple versions of it from different decades can be found on YouTube. These are believed to be the original words from the late 1940's and the bowling ladies belted this out with gusto:

I'm Chiquita Banana and I've come to say,

Bananas have to ripen in a cer-tain way,

When they are flecked with brown and have a golden hue,

Bananas taste the best and are the best for you;

You can put them in a salad,

You can put them in a pie-aye,

Any way you want to eat them,

It's impossible to beat them;

But bananas like the climate of the very, very, tropical equator,

So you should never put bananas----in the refrigerator!

That old Heintzman piano played to a lot of people until it was vandalized and rendered unplayable over the Christmas holidays one year and I knew it was time to move on.

Time moved on for the Mt. View Hotel as well. Author Larry D. Cotton, mentioned earlier, states that there was a time when the north side of Huron St. was nearly all saloons in Collingwood's earliest days in the mid 1850's. These were strategically located close to the passenger ships in the harbour and the original 1855 wooden Huron St. railway station to cater to the sea of humanity that passed through Collingwood on trains and ships, as well as the crew members of the ships. The Mt. View Hotel was the last vestige of that bygone era near the waterfront and no longer a major part of the social fabric of downtown Collingwood as it had been in the 19th and 20th Centuries. The building was sold to Larry Dunn in 2004 and by 2009 the people who lived in it were evicted over the health and safety concerns of the Simcoe-Muskoka District Health Unit and the Collingwood Fire Department. At this time the building was boarded up after which, over the next three years, the interior deteriorated to the point that

the Fire Chief would not allow anyone inside the place without wearing a hazardous materials suit.

In May 2012 demolition of the derelict hotel was a topic of conversation relating to the required widening of Huron St. In July of 2012, The Architectural Conservancy of Ontario came up with a proposal to preserve and restore the original 1865 portion of the hotel facing onto the extension of Hurontario St. Under this scheme, the 1872 and 1895 additions to the building bordering on Huron St. would be demolished, permitting the widening of Huron St., but preserving the original structure even though it was just outside the boundaries of the Downtown Heritage District. This never happened.

Following the earlier removal of all the former Shipyard buildings along Huron St., by 2012 the derelict Mt. View Hotel was all that remained from the 19th Century on the north side of Huron St. between Heritage Drive and Hurontario St. Its glory days as one of the social centres of old Collingwood were long in the past and it was standing in the way of progress. Huron/First St. is a connecting link for Provincial Highway 26 and this major artery needed five lanes in front of the hotel but there was room for just four. On July 30th 2012, Collingwood Town Council voted 7-2 to purchase the hotel for \$600,000.00 and to have it demolished. The sale took place in August and the building was demolished in mid-November. In its place there now stands a modern 3-storey office building called the Mountain View Towne Centre of which the major tenant is a Rexall Drug Store. A new Bank of Montreal stands in another building east of this that extends right to the corner of the extension of Ste. Marie St. One day there will be more new buildings where the Shipyard once stood and people passing through town on Highway 26, if they even notice, may assume “those buildings

have always been there". Land use changes with the years. The only thing that remains constant is the land, not the buildings on it.

David Vuckson is a great-grandson of pioneer Collingwood merchant R. W. O'Brien. His roots in town go back to 1875. David and his wife Pamela live in Victoria, B.C.