

TIME TRAVELLER'S DIARY: Lodging with the Lemons

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In 1868, the southeast corner of Yonge and Mosley Streets became home to the Royal Hotel, affectionately known as Lemon's Hotel after the innkeeper, George Lemon (1842-1923). Lemon was born in Markham and started his career as an innkeeper in Richmond Hill, before moving to Aurora where he operated the Royal Hotel.

In 1867, he married Sophia Meek and together they had four daughters.

Lemon's Hotel went through many transformations and during the early years, a tin shop stood directly beside it.

In 1872, the tin shop was destroyed by fire along with the hotel's stables and shed. That would not be the only time that smoke poured from the building.

In 1877, another fire severely damaged the hotel, but remarkably, Mr. Lemon was able to re-open it only three months later.

In 1888, the hotel was extensively enlarged and a three-storey addition was constructed behind the main building, which dramatically increased its size.

Before the construction of community centres, the Royal Hotel provided an important space for the community to organize. Residents would visit the hotel for club meetings, celebrations and to conduct business transactions.

The stables of the hotel also acted as a venue for horse breeding.

For example, in June of 1905, a registered trotting stallion, named The Duke 25375, stopped in at the Royal Hotel for two nights after traveling through Ballantrae, Udora, Pefferlaw, Sutton, Keswick and Newmarket.

The Duke was advertised as weighing 1,300 pounds with a race record of 2.29 and clients were guaranteed a quality colt or their bill would be waived.

During the 1880s and 1890s, the local lacrosse, hockey, baseball and football associations often held their annual meetings at Lemon's Hotel.

Victory celebrations

took place in the dining room, including one in 1902, after a friendly game of curling between the Aurora and Newmarket clubs.

The wager was an oyster dinner, which the Aurora club was treated to ? on Newmarket's tab, of course.

In 1911, George Lemon sold the Royal Hotel to Mr. Fred D. O'Leary who operated it for another 16 years under the name, The Club.

In 1927, the local paper lamented its demolition: ?another old land mark on Yonge Street in this municipality is disappearing with the tearing down of the Club Hotel, formerly the old Royal Hotel? (Aurora Banner, July 15 1927). In its place, Aurora gained Cousins Dairy and Bell telecommunication offices.