

Preston Springs Hotel 1888-2021



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1888-2020

From a lavish tourist destination to an empty, derelict building: A brief history of the former Preston Springs hotel. Information in this timeline is from Waterloo Region Record archives as well as Linda Revie's article, "A history of Preston's mineral springs," from the Waterloo Historical Society's 2004 publication.

1910 Hotel Del Monte postcard



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1838, Sulphur springs discovered

Joseph Erb discovers the first sulphur spring in the area when he was digging for salt. Three hotels cropped up in the area to benefit from the healing powers of the mineral springs in the latter half of the century. The North American Hotel, later known as the Kress Hotel, the Sulphur Springs Hotel, and Hotel Del Monte, later known as Preston Springs.

1910 postcard depicting Christopher Kress and John Paulter outside the Kress Hotel's mineral fountain in the middle of winter.



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1880-1888

Robert Walder discovered a sulphur spring on his property and decided to build a hotel reminiscent of one he visited in California. He tore down the small wooden shops his father had owned to build Hotel Del Monte. It was named after a resort he visited in Monterey, California. It became the third hotel to benefit from the mineral springs at the corner of Fountain and King streets.

1910 Hotel Del Monte postcard.



WATERLOO REGION RECORD

1921-1935, Preston Springs Sanatorium

Hespeler's Hagmeier brothers purchased the hotel for \$23,000 and renovated it to become a sanatorium. In its heyday, a fourth floor was added to the building to create extra rooms for the clinic. All kinds of treatments were offered to wealthy clientele, including electrotherapy, surgery, dental procedures, x-rays and more in addition to the healing mineral baths in the basement. The Kaufman family co-owned the building.

Especially during winter, the large stone fireplace and soft padded chairs near the front door provided Preston Springs visitors and patients with a cozy gathering spot.



WATERLOO REGION RECORD

1945-1947, War time transformation

Patients at the clinic dwindled during the Second World War. A. R. Kaufman was now the sole owner of the property. He arranged for the Royal Canadian Naval Base to operate a women's training centre there. The women continued to use the source of the mineral baths in the basement. It was capped after they left. A.R. Kaufman used the former hotel to house women who came from eastern Ontario and Nova Scotia to work at his Kitchener rubber plant.

Garfield Schmidt's 1948 aerial view of the historic intersection shows Preston's King Street entering from the right. Fountain Street runs diagonally. At centre stage is the Del Monte.



WATERLOO REGION RECORD

1950-1990, Preston Springs Home

In 1950, the building was turned into a retirement home for the first time by A. R. Kaufman. It was called Preston Springs Home. Preston Springs changed owners many times during the 60s, 70s and 80s, but it remained a rest and retirement home during this period before it closed for good in 1990. The building was designated as a heritage landmark in 1992.

1972, Manager R.C. Proud poses in front of the Preston Springs rest home.



PHILLIP WALKER, WATERLOO REGION RECORD

1997, Multi-million dollar project in the works

In the early 1990s, there were several plans to revamp the vacant hotel and return it to its splendor. It changed hands a few more times until a London developer buys the property with big plans to turn it into a retirement home and spa.



DAVID BEBEE, WATERLOO REGION RECORD

1999-2000, Construction underway

Construction crews were busy at work renovating the historic building. It was repainted, stucco was replaced over the brick exterior, and the iconic roof was also replaced.

Construction worker Julio Cesararus of Don Deb works on a steel frame roof for the peak of the old hotel.



MIRKO PETRICEVIC, WATERLOO REGION RECORD

2001, Work stopped, building for sale again

The multi-million dollar project went into receivership and the building goes up for sale again. Renovation work was abruptly halted halfway.

Work stops on the massive project that was going to revamp the former hotel.



DAVID BEBEE, WATERLOO REGION RECORD

2002-2012, Vandalism and arson

The former hotel is purchased again and renovation work continues. The start of a new century wasn't kind to the old hotel. Two suspicious fires were set during this time - in 2006 and 2010. The decrepit building is also starting to become a popular spot for vandals and scavengers.

The iconic building is up for sale once again.



PETER LEE, WATERLOO REGION RECORD

2012, Haastown Holdings buys Preston Springs

Haastown Holdings purchases the former hotel with plans to put in condos. City staff, politicians and media are invited to tour the inside of the building. It is littered with debris from unfinished renovations and the results of vandalism.



DAVID BEBEE, WATERLOO REGION RECORD

2020, City says building is unsafe

Cambridge's chief building official says the former hotel has deteriorated so badly it must be demolished. Despite being boarded up and secured, the city says trespassers still find their way into the building posing a risk to safety.

The former Preston Springs hotel has been boarded up to prevent vandals and trespassers from entering. The city has received many complaints about trespassers over the years.



MATHEW MCCARTHY, WATERLOO REGION RECORD

2021, The building is taken down

The former hotel has been demolished after an emergency demolition order issued on Christmas Eve. Demolition began on New Year's Eve and took five days to complete.

Source: Photo essay in Waterloo Region Record: Investors came and went, but no one was able to save the Preston Springs Hotel

By [Anam Latif](#) Record Reporter

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