

Windsor Hotel has offered accommodations for over 125 years

The Windsor Hotel, built in 1873 at 17-23 Albert Street, has been home to a range of establishments over its lifetime.

Back in 1878, the first office of the British Mortgage Company opened in the south corner of the hotel. In the early days, it served locals looking for a cold drink and travellers seeking a warm bed.

A newspaper report from Feb. 12, 1925 announced a change in ownership, the building being sold by longtime owner Thomas Gillespie to E. and L.A. Callghey of Oshawa. Referred to as "one of the finest properties in western Ontario," it outlined plans by the Callgheys to refurbish the hotel, bringing it up to then-modern standards. Plans called for a staff of paper hangers, decorators and electricians to "transform a large number of rooms."

"The aim of the new proprietors is to make the service in the

hotel outstanding and fill a need in the city by supplying another first class hostelry," stated the newspaper article.

At that time, the Windsor had 60 rooms and large rotunda and dining room.

Though it continued to operate over the following decades, it was not until the '80s the hotel became a source of controversy. In January 1980, a newspaper report said new owner Jack Cutler would be renovating the existing Red Lion Inn to make it look like a "British country inn." But the makeover was not necessarily meant to be when, in November 1982, four bartenders walked off the job after the owner introduced go-go dancers in the establishment.

Though police admitted the dancers were not performing any indecent acts under the Criminal Code, the employees were less



This photograph shows The Windsor Hotel in the late 1970s.

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than impressed. Gilles Turbide, vice-president of Royal Standard Inns – the operator of the hotel – said the decision to quit was that of the employees and the dancers were a tasteful addition.

But the racy ladies didn't last for long. The Windsor was again up for sale in 1985 and by 1986, the new owners were working to overcome the stripper stigma. Sam and Gus Karamoutzos pur-

chased the building and handed over operations. Jerry Heatherly managed the inn portion of the building and Jay Mace opened a new restaurant and bar. Heatherly continued to operate the inn until

the end of the 2005 theatre season. Three brothers, Stephen, Niall and Kevin McCotter, have taken over operation of both the restaurant and the inn and plan to renovate the rooms this year.