

Chapter Thirteen

ONE HUNDRED YEARS YOUNG

“BOTH HAVE WELCOMED people from around the world, and both have matured with grace and dignity.” — Premier Frank McKenna, Canada Day, 1989.

UNDER THE TENURE of manager David Smith (1979-83) there were no major changes to the property beyond the removal of the hotel’s cottages in the spring of 1983. They had been used as dormitories for some time and had become an eyesore. Cottage Number 2, the saltbox, was moved to its current location at the corner of Augustus and Montague streets, and the others were destroyed. A prosaic-looking staff residence, Cashman House, was built along Harriet Street around the corner from the old cottage row.

The property needed sprucing up because of what would be perhaps the hotel’s biggest media event since its opening in 1889: the visit of Prince Charles and Lady Diana on June 20. The visit would be part of a royal tour of Canada that included a three-day stay in New Brunswick. St. Andrews got in on the action by means of some help from Lord Shaughnessy, a grandson of Sir Thomas and sometime vacationer in Bocabec. Help was added by Lady Beaverbrook, whose Dunn and Beaverbrook foundations donated funding to help manage the local visit. Originally the couple intended to spend the night at the Algonquin, but plans changed at the last moment.

Expecting 30,000 visitors, the town and the province created parking lots outside town, serviced by shuttle buses for the aged and infirm. One hundred picnic tables and ten portable toilets, with enough toilet tissue for twenty-four, were distributed around the town. At the hotel, security was




cranked up to ridiculous heights. Royally appointed chefs were on site, and even the royal orange juice, it seemed, must have its inspector.

As with the Queen Mother's visit in 1967, celebrations began in rain and fog. Charles and Diana disembarked from the Royal Yacht *Britannia* on Sunday morning, June 20, at the town wharf, where they were greeted by ardent royalist Premier Richard Hatfield, Mayor Jack Boone, and Minister of Public Works Romeo LeBlanc, and were then sped to All Saints Anglican Church for a service conducted by Archdeacon John Jones. Originally Jones had considered a unilingual service in Welsh, but upon reflection he realized that, unlike the Prince of Wales and himself, not everyone knew Welsh. After much glad-handing with the assembled crowd of five hundred, the famous couple was escorted by motorcade to the Algonquin and treated to a one-hour reception hosted by Lieutenant Governor George Stanley and Mrs. Stanley. The event went well. The royal orange juice was not poisoned, the royal couple was suitably regal, and the Lieutenant Governor and Premier Hatfield managed to settle among themselves who had more seniority at the event. The only incident was the unfortunate interposition of Mayor Boone between the couple and the press during the ritual signing of the guest book, whereupon, to a good-natured chorus of "Move, Jack!" the mayor stepped grinningly aside.

A short walkabout concluded the reception. A special dispensation was made for Herbert Holland, a St. Andrews resident and inveterate royal watcher, who viewed the ceremonies from a perch on the Algonquin veranda. Three thousand children and spectators from as far away as Vermont and New Hampshire lined up along the nearby streets for a quick look as Charles and Diana were whisked back to their yacht. After a klaxon salute from local boats, they churned off to wow the rest of the Dominion.

THE THIRD-BIGGEST media event in the history of the Algonquin was the hotel's hundredth anniver-

ROYAL PROTOCOL

AS MIGHT HAVE been expected, the royal visit was riddled with protocol. Manager Smith and senior staff were required to produce a three-paragraph biography to be submitted to Charles and Diana in advance, so as to enable them to ask a few pertinent questions to otherwise total strangers. There was an open question as to who had more seniority at the event, the premier or the Queen's representative. A list of do's and don'ts for the event included the following information: "During the day the Princess of Wales usually wears a short dress and a hat; however, on some informal and on daytime occasions, she may decide not to wear a hat. The Princess of Wales rarely wears gloves during the daytime. Others may of course wear them if they wish. Do not smoke. Guests are requested not to take pictures. Initially the Prince and Princess of Wales are styled as Your Royal Highness; and as the conversation progresses they are to be addressed as Sir and Ma'am. Upon presentation of their Royal Highnesses, the gentlemen make a neck bow to both; the ladies curtsy to both." 


OPPOSITE *Lady Diana*, 1983.
FAIRMONT ALGONQUIN



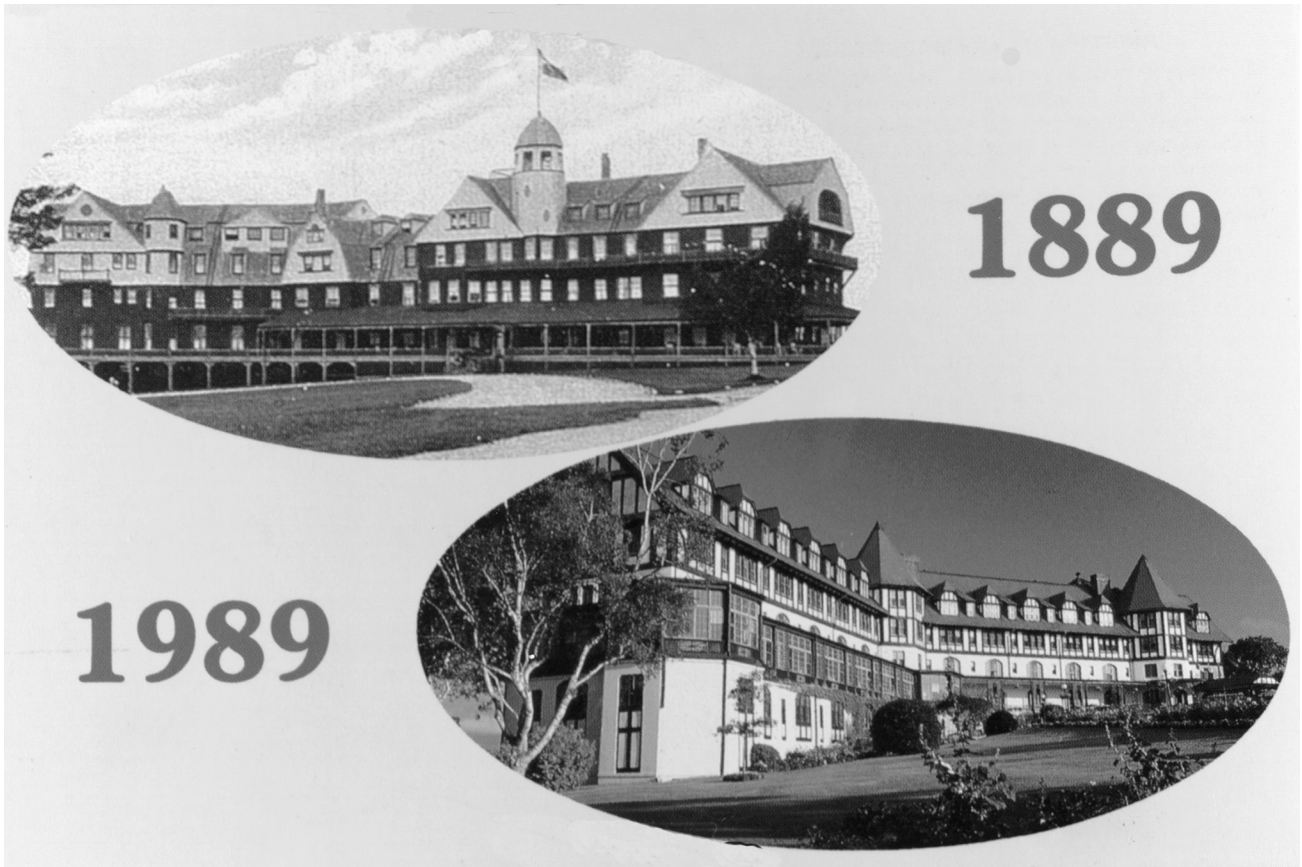
TIDES TIMED THE VISIT

ACCORDING TO FORMER manager David Smith, the royal visit was timed precisely to coincide with the state of St. Andrews' redoubtable tides. It had been determined that the royal couple would not, could not, or should not traverse the walkway from the float to the town wharf if it were inclined at an angle of more than thirty degrees. For those in the know, this bit of protocol may have struck some as overkill, especially given the Princess' preference for wearing comfortable, flat-bottomed shoes, but as might have been expected, the event was stage-managed at every level and even the tides were assigned their proper place in the drama. So it was, then, that while all eyes seemed to be turned upon Charles and Diana, at least one was observing the lowering tide, and before the dangerous decline of thirty degrees was reached, the royal couple had already been whisked safely down the walkway to the royal barge. ♪

sary. The celebrations kicked off in January of 1989 with a party of several hundred invited guests, including Governor General Jeanne Sauvé. Over the course of the summer other parties were held in Saint John, Moncton, Fredericton, and Halifax. At each venue, guests were shown a short video on the history of the hotel and presented with a keepsake fashioned by Birks Jewellers. Called "A Piece of the Roof," it was just that, a chunk of the old Vermont or Welsh slate roof that had been replaced the previous year. Over ten years later Jim Frise, who had returned to manage the Algonquin in 1985, reflected, "I still run into people today who say, gee, you know, I still have your piece of the roof on my desk." A manager to the core, Frise recalled that, aside from being an interesting souvenir, the "piece of the roof" was also an excellent marketing tool.

At the first event Frise was able to point proudly to record statistics: a record sales year of \$4,200,000, record profits of \$225,000, a record season length of 150 days, and an average occupancy of eighty percent. Over eighty percent of that year's tourist traffic in the province had come from outside New Brunswick, much of it because of the hotel. Frise felt that, with the new spa in place and other additions in the offing, the Algonquin stood poised to do even better, perhaps carving out a share of the market historically reserved for the Rockies resorts.

Spring celebrations emphasized history. A May dinner in the Passamaquoddy Dining Room for example featured a special guest appearance by Sir William Van Horne himself, actor Peter Pacey, who amused guests with the remark that "it's a distinct pleasure to be back in the hallowed halls of a hotel under CP management." Reid Hurley, local MLA, noted that the Algonquin was New Brunswick's most photographed attraction and Mayor Bev Lawrence described the hotel as a symbol of what is best about the town, "stately and grand, but not overarching." Frise was presented by NB Tel with a hundred-year-old telephone, in commemoration of the second phone line in St. Andrews, which connected the Algonquin with W.E. Mallory's Livery Stable.



In June there was an historic display at Fort Tipperary, devoted to both the hotel and the town, tracing their individual and parallel evolution over the years. The ribbon-cutting ceremony was performed by Margot Mais, grand-daughter of Lord Shaughnessy and generous benefactor to the hotel. In 1985 she had sold Fort Tipperary to the province at a discount rate. The

Algonquin mementos exhibited were provided courtesy of previous guests who had been asked to help fill out the collection. The section on Katy's Cove attracted much attention. Apparently, there were times at the cove when the dress code was the tiniest bit risqué. Given the conservative history of the town, though, with its manners and morals, it need not have been more than the tiniest bit risqué to have attracted significant attention at the time. The Ross Museum in St. Andrews staged a similar retrospective.



The biggest splash occurred on July 1, Canada Day. In tribute to the hotel's past there was a croquet tournament on the front lawn, a golf tournament on the small course, a birthday cake cutting ceremony, a Casino dance, and fireworks on the lawn. That day also saw the launching on the hotel lawn

Anniversary postcard and centenary sticker. FAIRMONT ALGONQUIN



Algonquin Managers, wives and friends, 1989. Left to right: Jim Frise, Don Williams, Norman Kennedy and wife, Hal Hannum and wife, Lila Haughn and husband LILA HAUGHN

of Willa Walker's interesting memoir, *No Hay Fever and a Railway*. Chiefly a portrait of the cottagers who helped make St. Andrews Canada's first seaside resort, it included a chapter specifically on the Algonquin as well. The chapter on the period between the wars gives a lively picture of the happy life in town and at the Algonquin. It was the first time anyone had attempted to tell the Algonquin's history at any length.


That night there was a gala dinner featuring American composer and songwriter Frank Mills. Premier Frank McKenna was there, as was the chairman and CEO of CP Hotels and Resorts, Robert Demone. McKenna said it was appropriate that the Algonquin's birthday be celebrated on Canada's birthday because "both have welcomed people from around the world and both have matured with grace and dignity." Bruce Smith, Minister of Supply and Services made an interesting and appropriate remark when he styled the Algonquin "the cornerstone and flagship facility for New Brunswick."

Several former managers were also present, among them Pat Fitt, Don Williams, N.E. Kennedy and Hal Hannum. Though Fitt worked at the hotel for only two years, he presided over an important series of renovations and seems to have been the first manager to attempt to beef up the hotel's con-

ference business in any systematic way. Williams, the man who presided over most of the staff revues, is remembered fondly in the recollections of many students who worked under him in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

The celebrations were marked by a number of recurrent themes. The most vivid had to do with snobbery. Elaine Bateman of the *Telegraph Journal* wrote a lively article in which several of the older townspeople, including Margot Mais, Earl Caughey, Willa Walker, and Harry Mallory, remembered the old days and how times had changed since then. They all agreed on one thing: in the old days, there was a rigid class structure in which wealth coloured the view. Caughey recalled how, as a young bellman steaming under broadcloth and brass buttons, the summer people liked “to make you know your place.” Walker remembered that the summer people would all have their mail sent to the hotel because, she said, “no one would consider lowering themselves to go to the post office in town.”

One curiosity about the anniversary celebrations was the confusion of the enlarged hotel of 1895 with the original building of 1889. Nowhere except in Willa Walker’s book were there any images of the handsome structure of 1889. The angled building with the wooden annex had become identified with the original Algonquin, as it often still is. Another oft-repeated myth was that the Algonquin marked the discovery of St. Andrews as a summer resort. Certainly the St. Andrews Land Company and the Algonquin did an enormous amount to popularize the place, but tourism had been on the rise for decades, and the Algonquin had really only ridden the wave.

The Algonquin’s anniversary marked a festive day in the history of St. Andrews. The *Courier* published a special insert on the event, as important to the town as to the hotel because of their interconnected history. 



Governor-General Jeanne Sauvé paid a visit to the Algonquin in 1984 and came back for its centenary celebrations. Shown here with General Manager Ken McKell. KEN MCKELL

