

Hotels – Cottage Grove Hotel

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In 1875, Charles C. Thompson owned Block 28 Lots 1-3 & 10-12 in Whitehall. A city directory listing for 1875-76 indicated that C. C. Thompson was involved in real estate and at that time operated his business from the Foster Block. His residence was listed as being at the corner of Slocum and Mears Avenue.

A map from 1877 showed that there was a building on Block 28 Lot 12 at the southwest corner of Slocum Street and Mears Avenue, where the Playhouse now stands. There was also a building on Lot 10 which would later become the location of the Cottage Grove Hotel.

From 1876 to 1878 John C. Lewis and George Eliason owned Block 28 Lots 7 & 8. John C. Lewis sold the two lots to George Eliason in June 1876 and Eliason sold the lots back to Lewis in December 1877. John C. Lewis built his house there in 1878. It is now the Lewis House B&B.

In January 1888, C. C. Thompson closed all his business affairs, resigned as Postmaster, and sold Block 28 Lots 10-12 to E. M. Ruggles for \$1,500, and moved out West. He died at his daughter's house in November 1891.

By 1897 William Flinn, his wife Mary and their four children: Dove Mary (1873-1938), Willa Anna (1878-1930), James William (1879-1950), and Minnie (1882-1921) were living in the former Thompson house listed at 117 Slocum (Block 28 Lot 12). William Flinn was a local area blacksmith. Mary Flinn died in 1902.

Shortly after Mary died, William moved in with his married daughter who was living in Cheboygan and where he died in 1907.

In April 1903, E. M. Ruggles sold Block 28 Lots 10-12 to E. M. Duttenhofer for \$1,500. One of the lots contained what was referred to as the old William Flinn house which Duttenhofer used as his residence until 1904. By September 1904, the house was moved to face Mears Avenue and remodeled into a modern first-class up-to-date hotel which became the Cottage Grove Hotel. When it was finished, Mr. & Mrs. A. W. Veal moved in to operate the hotel.

Arthur William Veal was born in Oxford, England around 1840. He came to the United States around 1865 and settled in New York for a number of years before coming to Whitehall. His first wife Sarah had died in England and he married Margaret Sutton on 4 May 1874 in Rome, New York. She took over the mothering of A. W.'s three children, Fredrick (1860-1928), Sarah (1864-) & Harriet (1868-1960), who arrived from England in 1873. Fredrick stayed in New York when A. W. and Margaret came to Whitehall with the girls in 1881.

Veal was a shoemaker by trade and had several boot and shoe stores in Whitehall over the years. In November 1889, Veal closed his store and sold his stock of boots and shoes to a dealer in Big Rapids. Shortly after, he headed to Tampa, Florida. After a short time there, they moved to Chicago for a number of years, returning to the Whitehall area by 1900. He joined with J. C. Hazeltine to form the Whitehall Shoe Store in January 1901. He became the proprietor of the Cottage Grove Hotel in 1904.

An ad in December 1907 advertised Christmas dinner at the Cottage Grove Hotel and to call A. W. Veal for reservations.

In February 1910, Mr. Duttenhofer was arranging to have an addition built on the hotel, as soon as the weather permitted. The plans included a more accommodating dining room and additional bedrooms which were greatly needed.

Mrs. Celia Brooks purchased the furnishings and took charge of the Cottage Grove Hotel from Mr. Veal in the fall of 1911. Mr. & Mrs. Veal were going to be leaving for St. Petersburg, Florida shortly.

In 1912, Charles H. Watkins then became the landlord of the Cottage Grove Hotel. Mrs. Brooks sold the hotel furnishings to Charles Watkins who then turned it over to George Gabrielson.

In February 1913, George Gabrielson was successful in negotiating the purchase of the Cottage Grove Hotel. Plans were in the works to enlarge the dining room to seat fifty guests, add an upstairs bathroom, and redecorate. However, due to the health of Mrs. Gabrielson, George returned ownership back to A. W. Veal in November 1913. After A. W. Veal took over the Cottage Grove from Gabrielson, he had a shoe shop arranged in the rear of the Hotel. In July 1914, Veal sold the Cottage Grove to Mrs. Mary Ahlgren of Chicago. Veal retired and he was planning a trip to Florida when the weather turned cooler. A. W. Veal died on 23 November 1915.

July 1915, Emanuel M. Duttenhofer and his wife sold Block 28 Lot 12 and the North ½ of Lot 11 to Julius J. Nuffer for \$925. These lots are where a new Opera House was constructed in 1916, just to the north of the Cottage Grove Hotel. That Opera House was the Nufer-Adams Playhouse, now The Playhouse at White Lake.

In June 1917 an ad appeared in the paper announcing the newly opened Lake View Hotel. This was the name that Mrs. Albert Winkler (Laura) had given the establishment when she took it over. She had moved to Whitehall from Blue Lake in 1914. However, Mrs. Winkler did not operate the hotel for long as she became ill and died in April 1918.

By May 1918, several ads appeared in the Whitehall Forum advertising the Cottage Grove for rent, so it appears to have reverted back to its' original well-established name.

In May 1919, it was reported that Mrs. Frank Weiler of Muskegon leased the Cottage Grove Hotel, which had been vacant for about a year. However, a short time later it was advertised as being available for rent again. Then E. D. Skeels, agent for E. M. Duttenhofer properties, advised through a news item in the Muskegon Chronicle that the Cottage Grove Hotel and a large boarding house were going to be wrecked and the doors and windows and other material from them would be sold. Perhaps Duttenhofer was planning on tearing down the Hotel because he wasn't getting any renters.

In August 1920, A. T. Llewellyn and family of Chicago rented the former Cottage Grove Hotel until they could find other suitable housing in the area.

In October 1920, Mr. & Mrs. E. A. Rolph rented the Cottage Grove Hotel from Duttenhofer and expected to furnish rooms with or without meals to their guests. Ernest Alfred Rolph was a locomotive engineer on the Santa Fe railroad but in May 1924 he began working for the Eagle Ottawa Leather Company. In February 1928 they bought the former Briggs house on Livingston Street with plans to move there in the Spring. In addition to working at the Tannery, he was also assistant manager and operator of the Playhouse for a number of years. Ernest died suddenly at his home on Livingston on 2 September 1934.

There was a short line item in the paper in August 1921 indicating that a Dr. Frank had his office at the Cottage Grove Hotel, so perhaps he was renting space from the Rolphs. This was the last newspaper item that seemed to mention the Cottage Grove Hotel by name.

It appears that sometime between February 1928 and August 1944 the Cottage Grove Hotel was torn down and the space was used as a parking lot for the Playhouse.