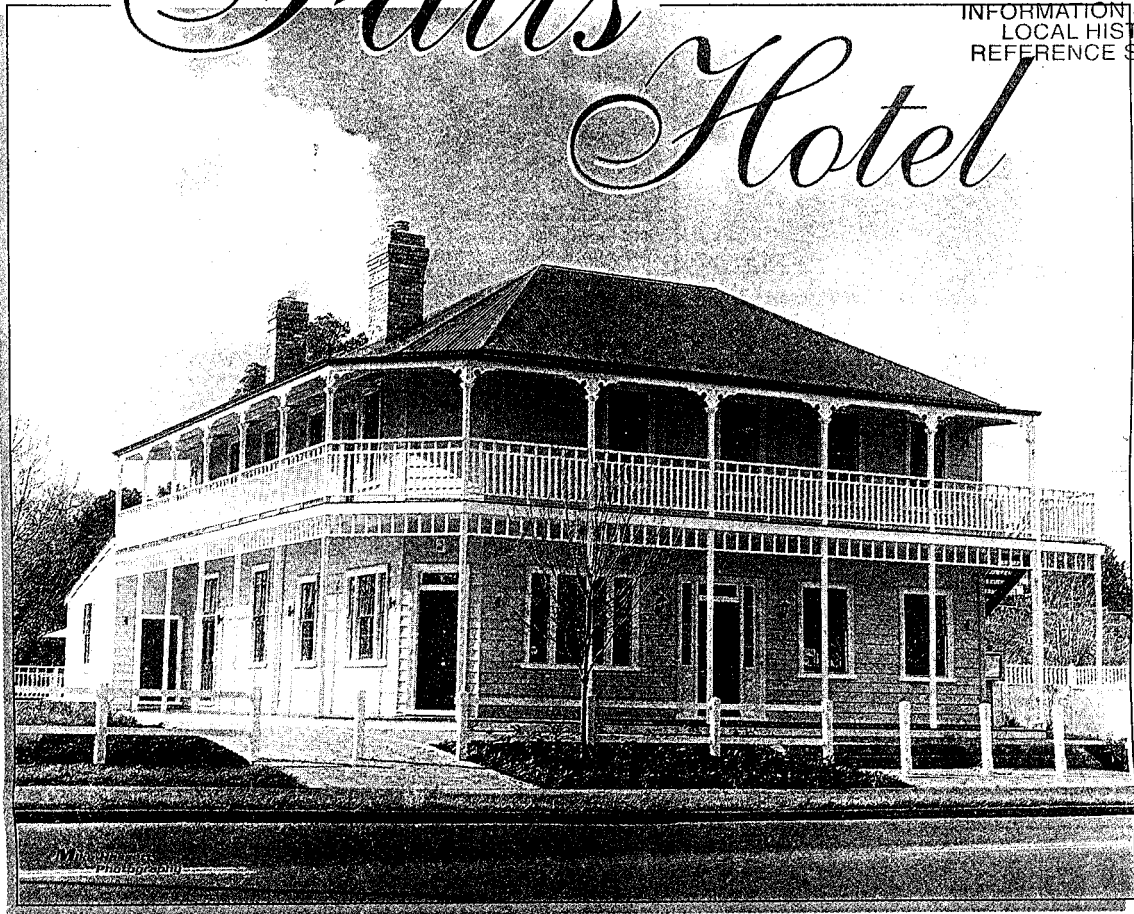


The Falls Hotel

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Celebrating The Grand Opening of The Falls Hotel

The Falls Hotel occupies a special place in the history of West Auckland. Built in the early 1850s, it is the oldest surviving building in Henderson.

The actual date of its construction has been lost, along with many other historical details of Auckland's "wild west" in the early days. A naval chart of the region from 1854 shows a large building east of Opanuku Stream which may well have been the hotel, with Henderson's Mill to the west of the stream.

Originally built on the corner of Great North Rd and Railside Ave, the hotel is one of the earliest examples of the "corner pub" that became a familiar sight throughout New Zealand - a two storey timber structure with verandas

around two sides. The original roof consisted of locally milled kauri shingles.

As well as serving the essential role of a drinking establishment for the new settlement, the hotel also contained accommodation for mill workers, a small store and the local post office.

The name Falls Hotel dates from the 1880s, when many visitors to the district stayed there on their way to view the Waitakere Falls - a spectacular sight at the time, but now just a trickle.

Before then the hotel was known by many names: the Horotea, Aritui, Oratia, and McLeod's Hotel are among the names that appear in the records. As McLeod's Hotel it received its first liquor license in 1873. The name Falls

Hotel first appeared around 1889.

In 1911 the hotel "went dry" when local prohibition was voted in and in 1925 it received yet another new name: Central Hotel and Boarding House.

Local land agent Steve Ozich bought the building in 1931 and renamed it the Central Private Hotel. He and his wife ran it as a boarding house for the next 30 years.

In 1953 a plumber using a blowtorch accidentally set fire to some of the roof shingles. As luck would have it, the fire brigade had trouble starting the fire engine. When they arrived, they saturated the interior of the hotel, resulting in extensive damage. Some of the original rafters bear burn marks from the fire.

As Henderson grew, the corner where the hotel stood became a highly desirable commercial location. In 1961 the building was moved about 14 metres back from the street frontage to make room for more shops on Railside Ave. The brick chimneys had to be demolished for the move, but otherwise it went smoothly - one resident slept through the entire four hours it took to

make the shift.

1978 was another landmark year for the hotel, when the Norcross family bought the property. The Norcross family have run businesses in Henderson since 1921.

In 1991 Steve Ozich left the hotel after many years, and it stood empty and derelict while its fate was debated. The Norcross family offered to donate the building to the community if funds could be raised for its removal and restoration.

Waitakere City Council agreed to meet removal costs and the Lottery Grants Board provided funds toward the restoration. The Falls Hotel Preservation Trust was formed to restore and administer the building.

December 1996 saw the hotel moved to Falls Park on the corner of Edmonton Rd and Sel Peacock Drive. Restoration work then began in earnest.

Last month the finishing touches were completed and the Falls Hotel restaurant and bar opened for business on June 22. The official opening ceremony takes place this Saturday, July 25 - see inside for details.



Falls Hotel was originally built on the corner of Great North Rd and Railside Ave, the hotel is one of the earliest examples of the "corner pub".



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