



## Early Hotels of Coeur d'Alene

Written by Stephen Shepperd, Robert Singletary and Britt Thurman

At the turn of the century, hotels in Coeur d'Alene epitomized the charm and allure of this burgeoning lakeside community. Nestled amid the breathtaking scenery of the Northern Rockies, these hotels served as bastions of hospitality and elegance, catering to both leisure travelers seeking respite and adventurous souls drawn by the region's natural splendor. Whether perched on the shores of the pristine lake or nestled within the vibrant downtown, each establishment had its own unique character and history, reflecting the spirit of a bygone era when the West was still being tamed and the allure of Idaho's wilderness beckoned to those seeking new lives and new fortunes.

The following is not an exhaustive list of the hotels

operating in Coeur d'Alene in its early days but rather a sampling of hotels that impacted the character and history of the city by the lake.

Likely the first established hotel in the city, the Coeur d'Alene Inn, originally named the Lakeside Hotel, was a two story, wooden structure built in 1880 on the fort grounds by James Smith. In 1884 it was purchased by C. B. King and moved to the south side of Sherman Avenue between Second and Third streets where it was enlarged by the addition of a wing and a third story and porches facing the lake.

In a 1903 article in the Coeur d'Alene Press, the Coeur d'Alene Inn was described as being "the leading hotel in

the section.... Delightfully situated overlooking the lake, the choicest [sic] of locations, it is an ideal summer abode. It secures the bulk of the summer resort trade, practically all the commercial traveller custom, and it is well patronized by the townspeople. There is no pleasanter place in the Northwest for an outing."

The Coeur d'Alene Inn was the leading hotel until 1905 when the Hotel Idaho was built. Over the years, the inn changed ownership numerous times and was last owned by H.W. Graham who purchased the establishment in 1910. It burned down the following year.



The Bancroft House was a two-story lodging facility on the east side of Second Street between Lakeside and Coeur d'Alene avenues. It was built in 1887 by R.W. Cochran and originally called the Cochran House. It was sold to B.I. Bancroft a couple years later (Bancroft also purchased the Coeur d'Alene Inn) who ran the establishment until 1901 when it was sold to M.C. Normoyle, who also managed the Coeur d'Alene Inn for a time. Normoyle changed its name to Hotel Normoyle.



In 1902, bedding caught fire and burned the hotel down. It was rebuilt in brick and a third story was added. The hotel was later sold in 1921 to Peter Helm and renamed the Coeur d'Alene Hotel. Sadly, its destiny would also be to catch fire, which it did on July 5, 1934.



In 1890, Peter Sorenson, a boat builder from Norway who built the first steamboat on Lake Coeur d'Alene, constructed the Victorian-style Sorenson House lodging facility at the foot of Tubbs Hill on Third Street, where he lived with his daughter Christina Marie Pauline (Sorenson) Olson. She helped him operate the property until the hotel burned to the ground in 1904.



The Franklin Hotel, built in 1904, occupied the second level of the Reese and Young Block, a two story triangle-shaped wood-frame building that was located on the southwest corner of Second Street and Sherman Avenue. It measured 135 feet along its two longest sides and was 85 feet deep at its eastern point. Because of its similarity in shape to the triangular Flatiron Building in New York City, it was referred to by many in the community by that name.

The twenty-room Hotel Franklin occupied the building's upper floor and opened for business on August 1 of 1904. The hotel office, a saloon, a cigar-confectionary store, a men's furnishings store, a restaurant, a women's hat store, and a German bakery were located on the first floor.

The hotel was burned to the ground by an arsonist in September of 1908, leaving two men dead. Its location is now a part of the front lawn of the Coeur d'Alene Resort Hotel.



In 1905, a group of local businessmen, including Fredrick Blackwell, created the Coeur d'Alene Investment Company and built a modern hotel, the Hotel Idaho, on the corner of First and Sherman near Blackwell Park and the new electric railroad depot. The new hotel opened its doors on July 3rd of that year. The exterior and interior of the new hotel was designed like an old Spanish Mission. The Hotel Idaho soon became one of the most popular hotels in the area. According to the July 16, 1906 issue of the Coeur d'Alene Press, "well-informed travelers say it is the best equipped hotel in Northern Idaho, if not the whole state."

The Hotel Idaho had 100 rooms with local and long distance telephone service. The hotel also featured a dining room and lounge called the Idaho Grill, plus spacious meeting facilities, and a swimming pool. The hotel parlors and balcony offered a spectacular view of Lake Coeur d'Alene.

In 1924, the Hotel Idaho was sold to Victor Desert of Spokane for a reported \$100,000. Desert, who also owned the Desert Hotel in Spokane, changed the name to the Desert Hotel of Coeur d'Alene. It was later sold to the 109 Corporation and then to H. F. Magnuson of Wallace.

The exterior of the hotel remained basically unchanged except for the elimination of the arched balcony/entrance and the archway entrance into the parking area, but the interior was remodeled numerous times.

On Sunday night, June 25, 1972, the Desert Hotel and several offices in the building were completely destroyed by fire. H. F. Magnuson, who owned the 67-year old building, estimated the loss to be over \$600,000. Thankfully, none of the guests or employees in the hotel were injured in the fire.

The Elite Hotel operated out of the Nixon Building at 412 Sherman Avenue. At the time of its opening in 1908, the hotel contained 42 well-appointed rooms that were described as "modern and convenient in every respect," according to promotional comments made in the Coeur d'Alene Press. The room count would drop to 41 when one

of the spaces was apparently set aside as the residence of the hotel manager.



During its first year, the hotel's retail space became the temporary headquarters for the county seat, which had just been moved from Rathdrum, and was home to a number of Kootenai County officials until the new City Hall was opened in December 1908.

Less than two years after the hotel opened, it was put up for sale, directly on the heels of the closure of the Elite Café. News reports indicated that the cafe's closure came because of the devastating effects that the passage of a local-option prohibition measure had on the business.

Having escaped two nearby fires throughout the years, the Elite Hotel was rebranded in 1971 as the Sherman Arms Motor Hotel. In December of 1979, an incident occurred that spelled an end to the hotel after 71 years of operation; the murder of the manager. Within six months, all of the hotel's furniture and other furnishings were put on the auction block, and the hotel closed its doors for good.



The Lakeshore Lodge was originally the commanding officer's residence at Fort Sherman, known as the Kerl House, at 721 W. Lakeshore Dr. During the early 1940s, Lola Kerl leased the house to Charles Finch who turned it into a lodging facility that he called the Lakeshore Lodge. Finch bought the property in 1945 and eventually sold it to Robert McFarland, who razed the historic home in 1957.

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## From the Executive Director



In case you didn't hear, we moved! Due to roof leaks and mold in the building we had occupied since 1979, we were forced to find a new home until our permanent home in the JC White House is complete.

We're now the proud new summer tenants of the Roxy Building (115 S Fourth St.), the former Roxy Theatre from the 40s and 50s. In the span of just four weeks, we hauled out

leftover furniture and junk from the previous tenants; thoroughly cleaned; painted walls inside and out; fixed electrical; installed a new fire exit; packed and moved all gift shop merchandise, retail displays, and office furniture; and carefully moved dozens of precious artifacts and exhibit furniture. We designed an all-new exhibit gallery by researching and rewriting exhibit panels, brought out and mounted new artifacts, and wrote new object labels.

To top it all off, we get to do this all over again in just a few months when we move into the JC White House. We made this move all while planning for and working at our biggest fundraising event of the year, the 1960s Gala, which was a huge success.

None of this would have been possible without our amazing volunteers and the crew from Coeur d'Alene Eagles. Saying we're grateful for their work is the biggest understatement of the year. We absolutely adore our volunteers!

To say we're all a bit tired is putting it lightly, but we are dedicated and driven to continuing to preserve and illuminate our past despite any obstacles that are thrown at us. We really hope you'll come visit us this summer to see how hard our team has worked and also check out some of the new gift shop merchandise we stock.

- Britt Thurman, Executive Director

## From the Board President

Successful author Michael Crichton once said, "If you don't know history, you don't know anything. You are a leaf that doesn't know it is part of a tree." We are all part of something that makes a difference in the quality of our lives. Those of us who are part of the Museum of North Idaho know that the understanding of our personal past and the past of the place in which we live is an essential component of feeling connected to this beautiful place. We understand that our ancestors dealt with different cultural values and did not treat the natives or the environment very well. We can't change that, but we can be especially sensitive to how we treat each other and the native people who share this place on the planet and see the lessons that come from what we have learned.

I ask myself often what I want my heirs to see when they look at how I lived my life. It is inspiring to see how we can bring forward historical lessons to create something good personally and culturally. Thank you for your investment in our future by knowing and learning from our past.

- Steve Towles, Board President

## Upcoming Events

### History Walking Tours - Saturdays through August

Learn about Coeur d'Alene's early history on a 90-minute walking tour with a local historian. This year, walking tours will be offered of Downtown Coeur d'Alene, Old Fort Sherman, and Sanders Beach. Visit [museumni.org/tours-properties](https://museumni.org/tours-properties).

### History Hour Lecture Series - Sept. 11 @ 5:30 pm

Join local Hydromaniacs Steve Shepperd and Doug Miller as they discuss the history of the boat races on Lake Coeur d'Alene and the impact the races had on the community. Lectures take place at the Coeur d'Alene Public Library and are free to the public.



### Cemetery Walking Tours - September and October

Our 4th Annual Cemetery Walking Tours are back and better than ever with new stories of North Idaho's oldest residents - the good, the bad, and the ugly. These tours sell out fast every year, so get your discounted tickets early when they go on sale to members on August 19th. Tickets can be purchased at [museumni.org/events](https://museumni.org/events).

### History Hour Lecture Series - October 9 @ 5:30 pm

Join Lance Cox with Bell Tower Funeral Home and Crematory for a spooky lecture on this history of embalming and funerary practices at the Coeur d'Alene Public Library. All lectures are free to the public.

### Antiques Appraisal Day - November 2, 11 am - 3 pm

Back by popular demand is our biannual Antiques Appraisal Day held at the Fort Sherman Chapel. Find out the value of the hidden treasures in your home. Tickets are \$25 each and go on sale soon.

## Harvest Festival



Join us for a fun day to celebrate the autumn season! From hayrides and pumpkin painting to food vendors, live music and a beer garden, the harvest festival promises fun for the whole family. Don't forget about the history demonstrations and programs too. The Harvest Festival is free and open to the public. Some activities are available for purchase.

If you're interested in sponsoring or being a vendor, contact Annette at [development@museumni.org](mailto:development@museumni.org).

## Seahawks Raffle



Enter to Win Two Tickets to the Seattle Seahawks vs. New York Giants Game!

Be part of the action at Lumen Field in Seattle, WA, on Sunday, October 6th, 2024, at 1:25 pm! We're excited to offer you a chance to win two exclusive tickets in Section 108, Row U for this thrilling NFL matchup between the Seahawks and the Giants. Purchase raffle tickets online at [museumni.org/raffle](https://museumni.org/raffle).

# What's Happening in Fundraising?

## JC White House Update

The Museum of North Idaho team has been working toward our goal to finish renovation and move into the historic JC White House. **Here is what is currently happening:**

- Columns and decking have been installed and railings are being painted and hung.
- Framing the interior of the elevator shaft
- Interior framing, electrical, HVAC, and drywall

### What are the goals from here?

- Finish raising the additional \$250,000 to complete the interior renovations.
- Design and install refreshed exhibits on North Idaho's history.
- Move everything from both Museum locations.
- Grand Opening Fall 2024!



## \$100,000 Matching Gift

We are so excited and honored to announce that a very generous, anonymous donor came forward at our 1960s Gala and offered to match up to \$100,000 in community donations for our capital campaign. At the Gala, we raised almost \$23,000 toward the match, and we are asking for your help to donate the rest.

This means that for every dollar you donate, another dollar will be donated by the donor. \$20 becomes \$40, \$1,000 becomes \$2,000, \$50,000 becomes \$100,000 and so on. Plus, every gift of \$5,000 or more will also get your name on our donor wall. This is a huge step toward getting us moved into our new home in the JC White House this fall.

The Museum of North Idaho is classified as an educational entity by the State of Idaho, and donations to us qualify for further tax credits beyond standard donation deductions.

Donations can be made by cash, check, credit card, or stock transfer. For more information on the various ways you can make a donation, visit [museumni.org/donate](https://museumni.org/donate) or contact our Development Director Annette Nolting at 208.664.3448 x4 or [development@museumni.org](mailto:development@museumni.org).

## Annual Gala



Thank  
You!



Thank you to everyone who attended our 1960s Gala or participated in our online auction and to all of the volunteers and donors who made this event such a big success. We are so grateful for the support from our great community. The day kept us on our toes with lots of rain and thunderstorms but thankfully turned into a beautiful evening! Because of the generosity of everyone who attended or donated, we raised over \$100,000 for MONI!

Do you want to help take the Museum of North Idaho to the next level? Join our fundraising or marketing committees. Email **Annette Nolting** at [development@museumni.org](mailto:development@museumni.org) to learn how you can get involved.

## New Artifact Donations

Donna Christianson - Books on Native Americans  
Dave Walker - Photos of CHS Shop Class, 1979-1984  
Valerie Stirek - 1944 Farm Plan from Soil Conservation  
Courtney Beebe - Salt and Pepper Shakers  
Clyde McCaw - Books and a CHS Viking Lap Blanket  
Dennis Davis - Toys, Y-J photo, IHM Book Covers  
Gail Montecalvo - Native American Breast Plates, Spurs, Telephone, and Books  
Wade Bilbrey - Forest Service Maps  
John Condon - Photos and Archival Materials from Lafferty Transportation and Successors  
Cd'A School District 217 - 1929 Portrait of Senator William Borah  
Ruthanne Rauer - Personal letter of her memories of the Roosevelt School  
Alvin Schaut - Postcard

## Volunteer Spotlight



**Jim Schramm** has been a volunteer with MONI since 2022 and helps with anything from the front desk to events to moving. Jim is also a master carpenter and has built a few displays for us. Thanks for your hard work, Jim!

## Shopping that Pays



Support the Museum while you grocery shop! Shop at Fred Meyer and a portion of every dollar you spend will be donated to the Museum of North Idaho.

Here's how it works.

1. Create a digital account
2. Link your card to the Museum of North Idaho by searching for our name and then entering our NPO number
3. Click Save

For help getting set up with Fred Meyer shopping rewards or with questions on how to make a donation, contact Annette Nolting at [development@museumni.org](mailto:development@museumni.org) or 208.664.3448 x4.

## Thank You to Our Donors!

### Up to \$100

Renae Bishop \* Marilee Wallace \* Dick Sheldon  
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### \$101 to \$499

Donna Brundage \* Dana & Charlie Specht \* Damon & Brooke Wood \* Jason & Caroline Towles \* Andrew & Suzi Steiner \* Hal Godwin \* Paula Marano \* Linda Shinn \* Ashley Adams \* Rick Rosenberry \* Pam & Rick Lohman \* Clyde McCaw \* Bill & Judy Drake \* Stephen Towles & Kari Joys \* MJ Watt \* Stephanie Shamoon  
Mackenzie Young \* Clay Storey \* Elise Burton \* Erika Willy \* Rosanne Valentino \* Butch & Connie McGee

### \$500 to \$1,000

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Idaho Community Foundation \* Deborah & Michael Rocks \* Dan Burgess \* Luke & Deborah Russell \* Jack Riggs & Sandy Patano \* Jim Chapkis \* Octavian Rivas  
Kathy Davis \* Jim Riley \* Sarah & Dan McCracken

### \$1,001 to \$10,000

Chevron \* Mike & Laurie Dixon \* James Schramm  
Kimberly Thurman \* Lenore & James Strong \* Connie Bode \* Dorinda Thurman \* Dave Patzer & Jena Hayenga

### \$200,000+

Anonymous Donor, Pledge by Anonymous Donor

## Foundations and Grants

Coeur d'Alene Rotary Club - \$500 for new exhibit furniture

Coeur d'Alene Sunrise Rotary Club - \$1,000 for new exhibit furniture



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The Museum of North Idaho preserves and illuminates our past to inspire our future.

