

STORY OF FAMED KLAMATH HOSTELRY

White Pelican Brings Back Flood Of Memories To Many Old-Time Basin Residents

By LOIS STEWART
Oldtimers still talk about the White Pelican hotel.

It stood at the corner of Main and Esplanade from December, 1911, until fire swept through the structure the late afternoon of Saturday, October 16, 1926. The adage that what you have you don't appreciate, did not hold true. Klamath Falls was proud of the White Pelican hotel and there was a genuine feeling of sadness as scores stood by and saw the walls crumble.

Said the Klamath News the next morning:
"The White Pelican hotel, the first building to herald the growth of Klamath Falls, was a smouldering mass of twisted steel and blackened stone and brick last night as the result of the fire which totally destroyed the \$400,000 edifice yesterday."

"Upon the ashes of what was The White Pelican hotel, the most famous hostelry of Southern Oregon, will rise a modern and magnificent building that will continue the name of The White Pelican and all that it meant to the tourists and business men with whom the old hostelry was a by-word."

Never Rebuilt
But The White Pelican was never rebuilt and Klamath Falls has seen nothing in the way of a hotel to equal it.
The disastrous fire of 1926 broke out in the basement of the hostelry as an engineer repaired a broken ammonia line. Later smoke was detected and in a matter of minutes flames swept through the two elevator shafts which served as great suction pipes.
Hope Kilbourne was the manager of the hotel at the time it burned. T. P. Henderson was the Klamath representative of the Fleischacker interests and the Klamath Development company and it was he who made the statement that the company planned to rebuild the hotel.
The history of The White Pelican hotel is the history of the Klamath country.
First rumblings of Klamath Falls' development from the real estate angle is noted in the October 20, 1909 issue of The Evening Herald. Said W. O. Smith, editor:
"Has the long lull in the realty market of this city been simply the quietness that precedes a storm? One of the principal agencies causing this change is the work that is being done by the Hot Springs company. Another factor is the awakening of some of the real estate men themselves. For the past two years they have been in a lethargy. Some of them have awakened to the fact that it is their turn to move. Others will continue in their state of innocuous desuetude or hang around the edges grabbing what they can flch from their enterprising competitors. Klamath Falls is recognized throughout

the coast as the City of Destiny."
Almost nine months later, in the July 7, 1910 issue of the same paper appeared the first account of the hotel's construction.
"Ground was broken this morning on the new hotel that is to be erected at the junction of Main street and the Esplanade. Under the direction of J. L. Cunningham, who has the contract for the building, 16 head of horses were started on the work of excavating for the basement." There followed a description of the hotel but the name, "White Pelican," did not appear. Plans and specifications were prepared by Ben McDougal of San Francisco and a perspective was on exhibition in the office of the Hotel Livermore.

On July 12, 1910, residents of the city were being assured that another fine hostelry would be under construction immediately—this time at the other end of town. Plans for a 100-room hotel at 3rd and Main, complete with Turkish bath, cold storage plant and refrigerating system, were explained to the public. On the ground floor will be a large banking room, The Herald reported, with two systems of vaults, one for a safety deposit business and the other for the use of the bank itself. The proposed structure was also to include two dining rooms with a "lobby embellished with seagull columns with gold caps and wainscoting of marble." The hotel was to cost around \$100,000 including some \$30,000 for furniture for the four-story structure.

White Pelican Named
In the meantime, work continued at the other end of Klamath Falls on The White Pelican. The next May the name of the hotel was announced and readers of The Herald of May 12, 1911, read this thrilling story:
"The complete plans and specifications for The White Pelican hotel, which is being erected at the corner of Main and Esplanade, were received yesterday. The building will have a frontage on Main street of 154 feet and 144 feet on Esplanade. The concrete foundation is half finished. The hotel will be four stories and a basement, seven feet in the clear, with pressed brick fronts on Main and Esplanade. The walls will be constructed of Klamath county red brick. The triangular corner will be finished with marble steps and a large vestibule. Natural hot water from the springs with some city water will serve the 31 baths."
Between July, 1910, and May, 1911, there were no stories to indicate that the 3rd and Main hotel venture had been successful.

In early October, James J. Hill, "The Empire Builder," announced at Bend his intention of spending \$1,000,000 in the extension of the line south to connect with the Pacific & Eastern. Real estate men knew that their time had come as the Oregon Trunk would be in operation from Triun to Crescent in Klamath county and it would be but a matter of time before the railroads played an important part in the development of this county. Folks were doubly sure that The White Pelican would be the meeting place of the Pacific coast's financiers.

Livermore Plans
Klamath residents, all set for the opening of The White Pelican, opened their October 6, 1911, issues of The Herald and were advised that "the Livermore Hotel company will give Klamath Falls a more centrally located European house than it now has." The fight to keep business in that part of town, 4th and Main, continued.

The Livermore company "secured possession of the larger portion of the Withrow-Melchase building at the southeast corner of 4th and Main" and plans were being made to construct a new building on Main in the place of the frame building, probably around April 1, with occupancy ready three months later. This hotel was to have running water and 80 rooms.

Said The Herald: "The company, which consists of Mrs. A. B. Livermore and her sons, Arthur and Jesse B. has for some time been looking for a new location instead of the present stand at the corner of Main and Second street and at one time it was thought that the company would operate the new White Pelican."
Plans for the Livermore went on and the tenants of the Withrow-Melchase building upstairs are all making arrangements for new quarters and most of them have secured them. Dr. Merryman removed some days ago, and County Assessor Bill Lee will make new headquarters in the IOOF building. Justice of the Peace Graves will probably try to find a room that is more ample for the requirements of a justice and others who have had quarters in the same structure will flit."

Lakeside Inn Closed
Admission that the business district was rapidly advancing to the east, appears in a story dated October 16, 1911, announcing the closing of the old Lakeside Inn.
"An auction sale held at the Lakeside Inn this morning by Mrs. M. McMillan to dispose of the furniture of the old hostelry marks the closing of one of the oldest stopping places in Klamath Falls, and also emphasizes that the business center of the city is rapidly advancing farther to the east."
"The passing of the Lakeside Inn, which has writ its fair share of history in this town, and the intended removal of the Livermore to Main and 4th in the next few weeks, with the opening of the new White Pelican hotel about the same time,



Pride of Klamath and southern Oregon, the above pictures show The White Pelican hotel, above when it opened its doors December 3, 1911, and justly won fame as one of the most famous hostelries on the Pacific coast. Below, walls of the hotel crumble in the fire which leveled the structure the afternoon of Saturday, October 16, 1926. The hotel stood on the present site of the Balsiger Motor company, Main at Esplanade. (Pictures on this page courtesy of E. B. Hall and Charles Stark).

mark an important epoch in the hotel life of Klamath Falls." (The Lakeside Inn stood on the banks of Link river and last vestiges of the hostelry are now being razed for the proposed Veterans Memorial Park.)
It was almost daily copy, now, as the White Pelican was nearing completion. October 17, 1911:
"J. E. Brower, manager of the new White Pelican hotel, which is expected to open with elaborate proceedings including a banquet, has been joined here by his new chief clerk, E. H. Louser, steward, C. A. Hoffman, and a brother of the last named, H. Hoffman, who will have charge of the engineering department of the new hostelry."

Imported Talent
"The Hoffman brothers are from the Palace and Fairmont hotels, San Francisco. About 100 guests are expected to come from Portland by a special train to attend the ceremonies and inaugural dinner, and invitations have already been extended. Mr. Brower has a number of penants to advertise the hotel and these will be placed in conspicuous places."
At a council meeting of that week, a saloon license was "apparently granted" to James H. Driscoll, an employe of the Klamath Development company.
The ladies were shopping here and in San Francisco, still referred to as "The City" by the oldtimers, for the gala opening. Mr. Louser, the chief clerk, announced that the price of plates at the opening banquet would be \$3, instead of the "fancy prices which have been rumored."

The ceremonies incident to the commencement of hospitality by the big, new hostelry, will take place on Saturday night, December 2, 1911, and a large company of specially in-

vised guests are expected to be on hand to enjoy the occasion, in addition to the local people who have been invited to attend.

Special Train Run
"It is understood," The Herald reports, "that for the benefit of 100 or so guests from Portland, a special train will run from that city to Klamath Falls for the doings. A large corps of waiters to be imported from San Francisco at heavy expense is understood to be one of the items contemplated by the management. A local orchestra has been engaged through James Newnham, the cornet player."
Again the Livermore is given Page 1 notice as The Herald announces on November 2, 1911, that "hammer and saw are being kept busy now on the Withrow-Melchase building to house its guests by November 14. The company will conduct two hotels, both at 4th and Main and 3rd and Main."

But the Livermore was small punkins compared to the flurry caused by the elegant White Pelican. Reservations were pouring in and Mr. Louser was "puzzled to know where to put all of the people." A full house was satisfactory even in those days.
"When the new White Pelican opens its doors on Thanksgiving Day, a particular reason why its promoters will give thanks is that the house will be full to the brim."

So that guests could be accommodated, Mr. Louser said he planned to bring two sleeping cars here for the help which would include about 40 people, clerks, bellboys and men and women of all work.

No Laughing Matter
The White Pelican management stood, right from the start, against levity of any kind as pertained to its hostelry. A

History Linked With City Development

Replied Mr. Louser:
"It certainly 'is to laugh' at the decided ignorance displayed in the above missive. The menu published several days ago showed very plainly that 'petit fours' would be served as part of the dessert on the banquet menu of the White Pelican opening."

"There is quite a difference between petit fours (assorted small cakes) and petit pois (small peas), showing that the person's knowledge of such matters is extremely meager. Our steward is not capable of making such preposterous mistakes, and the party in question needs some extensive schooling on matters pertaining to the cuisines of hotelism."

With this verbal sniff, Mr. Louser said that crews were working day and night to finish the hotel.

Townsmen's Wonder
Laboring with each passing hour the townsmen began to wonder how the hotel could be put in shipshape for the opening. Said The Herald:

"Others may have their troubles, but oh, you White Pelican hotel men!"
Spaces other than to be actually occupied by the hotel were being rented. The corner store room was taken over by Clarence H. Underwood with a drug store and he also took the other Main street room for a store to contain sporting goods, fishing tackle, cameras and such. The cigar stand in the lobby was his concession also.

And now for the christening of the hotel, which had been table talk for two long years:
"The dedication of the White Pelican hotel, the most pretentious enterprise in this part of the country and one of the finest hostelries on the Pacific coast, was formally christened."

"The ceremony, likewise the bottle, was in the keeping of Miss Louise Benson, daughter of Judge and Mrs. H. L. Benson of this city, and the breaking of the bottle against the hotel at the entrance by Miss Morrow was witnessed by a large number of invited guests, both from this city and Portland, San Francisco and other cities."

Officers on Hand
"All the officers of the Klamath Development company, President S. O. Johnson, Vice President G. X. Wendling, Treasurer W. Paul Johnson and Secretary D. O. Williams, were on hand."

A long list of prominent guests from cities up and down the Pacific coast, attended the opening which was climaxed the next evening, December 3, with the elaborate banquet where 280 persons were seated in the ivy decorated dining room. Judge Benson presided and Mayor Fred T. Sanderson of Klamath Falls responded with references to "strategic" advan-

tages of this city. Silver bon boxes were presented to the women as favors and a booklet by Mr. Louser was at the plate of each guest.

The hotel appeared to operate without a hitch after the formal opening although two weeks later an item seeped into the paper discussing the "temporary coolness" of some of the guests as the hot water system appeared to be unsatisfactory. A pump was ordered from New York and the management assured guests that it would soon be warm as toast.

Dutch Room Attractive
To those who frequented the White Pelican hotel, one of the most attractive rooms was the Dutch room which was installed not long after the opening. The room was next to the bar and had an entrance from Esplanade. The mural ornamentation included beer kegs in bas relief, "little Dutchmen in the same variety, tapping kegs and looking joyful just like the little whiskered men in Rip Van Winkle."

With the opening of The White Pelican, the hotel soon became the center of entertainment. Private parties were given in the spacious dining room where dinner dances were given during the winter seasons. The ladies' lounge was the scene of many elaborate teas planned by the chef, Peter Cravetti, and "Sunday dinner out" meant taking the family to the White Pelican where the table service stressed the plump bird, engraved on each piece of silver and on the green wine glasses and crystal ware.

J. E. Brower was succeeded as manager of The White Pelican by Chief Clerk E. H. Louser. The next manager left behind him only a memory of his "cello playing accomplishments and old timers could not remember his name. Walter Innis served as manager for a time and joint management was handled following Innis by a pair named Conway and Ingram. Bert Hall, now operator of Hotel Hall at 4th and Main, was manager of The White Pelican for a number of years and he was succeeded by a man named Short. A. G. Morrison replaced Short and was the manager when we first came here. Hope Kilbourne was manager of the hotel at the time of the fire.

The gracious hospitality of the White Pelican will live long for those who were entertained there.

(Ed. Note: Appreciation is expressed to many Klamath Falls residents who answered questions and volunteered information in regard to the history of The White Pelican hotel. Especially are we grateful to Bert Hall, one-time manager of the hotel, who made valuable suggestions and provided the list of hotel managers of the famous old hostelry.—L.S.)



The evening of January 14, 1914, saw a gay party in progress in The White Pelican ballroom when Mrs. E. B. Hall was hostess at a "suffragette party" for women only up until 10 p. m. Then the men started to arrive, all garbed in some sort of feminine attire. Many of those in the picture are still making their homes in Klamath Falls.



The vine festooned dining room of The White Pelican hotel was not only famous for its gracious interior, but the food was as fine as anywhere in the country. Orchestras played for dinner dances, fresh flowers decked the tables and here the entertaining was done by the town for many years.



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