

The Historic Hotel Lincoln in Harrington

A rich past, and a bright future



*my old man
soon built long*



First stop city hall

“Those in the know . . .” Who are they today in Harrington? If you visit Harrington, you will soon learn that a central person in town is Bunny Haugan. She keeps the city running, and if you have a question—past, present and future—she either knows or can direct you to the person who can provide the answer. Bunny and her husband Edwin have been residents in town for 47 years. Before Bunny took the job as clerk at the City Hall, it was Mary Alice Warwick who operated the office. Described by Bunny as “extraordinary, amazing, and a great mentor.” She did it all, and she, like Bunny, was an endearing person who helped everyone and always made serving the community her first priority. She continued to work at City Hall into her 90s, filling in for Bunny on occasion.

Keeping the City Hall operating smoothly is no easy job, but Bunny provides valuable assistance to the people, the mayor and the City Council in Harrington—and makes it look easy. The door to the City Hall is a busy one and Bunny creates a welcome environment where people feel comfortable. She is enthusiastic about the work going on at the Hotel Lincoln. In conjunction with the successful restoration of the historic Opera House, it is building on a collective effort by this community.

Another bit of history comes to visit

The Hotel Lincoln work continues with genuine interest from local area residents. Curious questions, site visits, inquiries as to the plans for the building are constant as the giant bins of recycled materials leave the site. The re-occurring theme or question is “How can we help?” The neighborly approach is a welcome change from the anonymity of other communities.

One such inquiry surprised everyone. One afternoon, Geoffrey Talkington, a local resident, was hailed by an elderly gentleman on the main street, who asked him what was going on inside the hotel. The man had heard from a friend that something was happening with the building and came from Wilbur to see for himself. Geoffrey offered to make introductions, so he and the gentleman knocked on the door of Hotel Lincoln. The door opened, and a dusty man with a mask pushed up on his head greeted the two.

“What are you doing with this building?” asked the gentleman. The reply from the project foreman was, “It is

being rehabilitated to its original luster.”

You could see the twinkle in the old man’s eye. “I used to live here, from 1925 to 1929,” said the man. “My name is Frank W Hanson, and my parents owned the building at that time.”

At 90 years old, he still looked fit, drove a car, and played daily games of cards at the local diner in Wilbur.

The great escape

The stock market crash of 1929 affected everyone, including the owners of the hotel, Mr Hanson’s parents. They were forced to move and sell their beautiful place, taking a great loss. Mr Hanson remembers how upset he was when he had to move. No more marbles with friends in the backyard, no more curious times going in to the lobby and seeing his mother’s friends playing bridge, and SMOKING! The smoking was something of a shock to him, as ladies did not usually smoke in public in those days.

Then, there was the great escape, which was fascinating to him and all of his friends. In those days, prisoners were kept across the street in jail at the old City Hall. At mealtime, they were marched to the hotel to eat. Three particularly notorious men arrived at the hotel, and ate their meal peacefully; but left abruptly.

They ran the short distance to get to the silk train. It was heading east and stopped to take water at the Harrington siding. The fleeing fugitives hopped the train but were picked up a short time later by the local sheriff in Bluestem, not far from Harrington. Mr Hanson shared a few other bits of history, and was extremely helpful as he walked through the main floor of the Lincoln and verified how the hotel looked when he lived there.

After over an hour visit, he stated that he should probably get going. He thanked the project foreman, and walked out of the hotel using a cane to support his mending leg. He got into his cream-colored Sedan De Ville, and drove away. Before he left, Mr Hanson had offered to meet at a later date to talk more about the hotel and his life there,

but unfortunately he passed away unexpectedly on Easter Sunday, 2009.

Painstaking progress

Each day the hard-working men of the Hotel Lincoln are making progress carrying on the slow and careful process of rehabilitation. At times it is surprisingly interesting work, especially when they find treasures from the past. They've found an old advertisement behind a baseboard for horse and cattle powder. "Sleekene," a condition powder for horses and cattle produced by GC Hanford Manufacturing Co, Syracuse, New York. Two handwritten notes are scratched on the dusty, fragile old paper with a fountain pen: "Gents, enclosed find a check of \$45.33 for shipment July 2, 1908. We are getting good reports on your Sleekene right along. Respectfully, Lanson Bros."

The second note is similarly complimentary: "Gentlemen, Enclosed find order for Balsam Myrrh. We are having good reports of your Sleekene. Partys whom have tried it say it is fine. I remain very truly yours, A.J. Baker, November 5th, 1908." It was a way for the wholesaler and the retailer to provide complimentary feedback to the makers of this product by way of the salesman who delivered it. He stayed at the Hotel Lincoln, and this little testimony was inadvertently left behind after his stay in one of the original sleeping rooms off the kitchen.

Coins in the cracks



One of the men found a 1943 S steel penny. The penny became a point of conversation as they scrutinized it, holding it up to the light, and discussing why the penny is silver. At the time the penny was made, World War II was going on, and copper was needed to make ammunition.

The US mint used zinc-coated alloy steel instead of copper. Problems arose as the coins were mistaken for dimes. Magnets in vending machines, used to pick up steel slugs, picked up the legitimate steel penny resulting in the loss of the money to the purchaser. The steel penny was only made for one year.

Another coin was found; this time it is a Liberty nickel dated 1907. It seems like an even more exciting find than the penny and possibly more valuable. Liberty nickels were made between 1883-1913. The Liberty nickel has a colorful history: the mint failed to put the word "cents" on the back of the first coins, which led to early scammers plating the nickel with gold and passing these off as \$5

gold pieces. It was new and people were not familiar with the coin, but rumors began to fly that the coin was about to be recalled, so people started hoarding them. The 1883 "no cents" coins can be found in pretty good shape as a result. The mint added the word "cents" to the coin midway through the 1883 mintage run. The Liberty nickel of 1912, was replaced by the Buffalo nickel in 1913, however, five unauthorized 1913 Liberty nickels were minted. These nickels are extremely valuable today. The Liberty nickel has so much history, that it is now a favorite among collectors and dealers. It is remarkable how much history is found just in a few little coins.

Evelyn was here

As the first part of the deconstruction nears completion, plaster walls have been removed, lathe and plaster recycled, more little items are being found. The hotel looks like a skeleton on the inside, and anything that could be discovered would be revealed now. A photograph of a little girl is picked up out of an old box with some clothes. There is no name on the back, or date on the photo, but the clothes she is wearing look like early 1900 style. She is very pretty with neatly curled hair, and has on a dress with a crocheted collar.

Another fascinating discovery was a little wooden whistle—the kind a child might play with. It is hand-carved, and is about the size of a dog whistle. A postcard dated December 10, 1909 is found addressed to Karl J Gorman of Wenatchee, Washington. "Dear Karl, Card rec'd glad to hear from you will write you again before Xmas. Anne was well have not heard from Lane co. for some time it is cold w- zero and first snow storm Sunday. Might write soon with love Evelyn." The stamp is upside down and the postcard is postmarked from Chicago.

The Hotel Lincoln was a fine and worthy establishment when it was built. Now, 107 years later it will receive all of the best care and a unique designation on completion of the rehabilitation. It is planned that the building will be finished to LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) specifications, and is in the nomination process for the State and National Register of Historic Places. There are only a few buildings that have achieved both designations. Each step of the process is fascinating as the building transforms.



When this innovative project is complete, the Hotel Lincoln team knows that they will be part of the history of the building, just like the people who built it and lived there in the past. As phase one is nearing completion, the team is anticipating the next phase—beginning the process of putting the hotel back together. ■