

Opulent hotel leaves legacy

▼ **COMMUNITY:** Objects from Dewey Palace on display at Historical Society Museum

By Dan Black
Idaho Press-Tribune

NAMPA — A few random objects from the Dewey Palace Hotel are enough to get the imagination going: room keys, a ceramic door number, a coat hanger, a clock, a post from the staircase, historic photos of the building's interior and exterior, fine china with the hotel's logo, a menu from the elegant restaurant that served Russian caviar and turtle, a chandelier, a square nail; and, stunningly, a photo of Col. William H. Dewey in the hotel during the short time he lived in the building before he died in May 1903.

The hotel was finished only a few months before, at the end of 1902.

Col. William Dewey died of "dropsy," a term used at the time for edema, or a buildup of fluid in the body's tissues. He was 79 and left behind a dramatic story involving four wives, Indian negotiations near his Silver City mines, a railroad, a gunfight and murder conviction and finally, a hotel that was deemed the finest between Omaha City, Nebraska and Portland, Oregon.

A new exhibit of Dewey Palace Hotel opens Tuesday at the Canyon County Historical Museum, located in Nampa's historic train depot. It features items from the period, but is special for the objects that actually came from the Dewey Palace Hotel.

The museum is only a block from where the majestic hotel stood from 1903 to 1963. Visitors to the museum can walk a block south to see where it once stood, taking up nearly the whole block south of 1st Street between 12th and 11th avenues. Now, the Wells Fargo Bank and Kings Pro Tire stand where the hotel overlooked Nampa's bustling downtown.

To see the last remaining part of the hotel complex, according to Canyon County Historical Museum Curator Wendy Miller, just walk south to 2nd Street and peak behind the Hong Kong Grill to see the hotel's former steam building, which gave the hotel its laundry service. Look for the ornate cornices under the roof, painted white and cracked from weather and time.

Those interested in learning about Dewey's legacy can buy books at the museum, talk to curators, see objects from the



Canyon County Historical Museum Director Wendy Miller points to a case of Dewey Palace memorabilia on display at the museum's new exhibit.

A menu from Easter, 1903, indicates the opulence of the place. It served up items such as the following:

- Clear Green Sea Turtle
- Russian Caviar on Toast
- Queen Olives
- Consommé in cups
- Fried Shad, Sauce Tartar
- Boiled Shoulder of Veal, Chili Sauce
- Tenderloin of Beef, Larded, au Champignon
- Baked Spring Lamb, Green Peas
- Queen Fritters, Vanilla Cream Sauce
- Roast Chicken with Dressing, Cranberry Sauce
- Roast Ribs of Prime Beef, au Jus
- Loins of Pork, Apple Sauce
- Waldorf Salad

hotel and let their imaginations go. Miller is writing a book about Dewey, or to those who knew him, the Colonel. He was given the honorific title because, when visiting Kentucky, he was recognized for his "wheelings and dealings," Miller said.

Dewey's life was full of tragedy, triumph and drama. "He lived large," Miller said, adding that the details of his life help tell the story of how the West developed.

After his death, the hotel served as a showpiece for Nampa, catering to high-end rail travelers and those who could afford to use its rooms as apartments. Its giant bar was closed during local and national prohibition, and eventually, its high-end clientele could not support the lavish structure.

It closed as a hotel in 1956 and was sold out of the family shortly before its demolition in



The Dewey Palace in its early days.

1963. Before it was torn down, the owners held an auction, where many hoteliers from far-flung areas bought up the hotel's furnishings.

The few objects that remain in the area remind Nampans of that ornate structure built in a southern colonial style.

"It was his last and finest endeavor," Miller said, adding that for \$1 a day, guests could enjoy the bowling alley, billiard hall, grand ballroom, bar and sit in ornate writing rooms. The building boasted an elevator and in the basement there was a "drum room" where salesmen could pitch their wares.

Miller said she is asked constantly about the Dewey Palace Hotel and she decided it was time to host an exhibit. The museum has prepared previous exhibits about the hotel before, but with new interest in the

downtown's history, it seemed appropriate.

Laurel MacKinnon has purchased several historic buildings downtown and dubbed the area the "Belle District" after Col. Dewey's last wife. The city, library board and Central Nampa Development Commission have looked at ways to revitalize the downtown while preserving historic buildings.

Miller and several volunteers have put together objects that offer a glimpse into what life was like at the time of the Dewey Palace Hotel. They know of some key objects that have not made their way into the collection, and continue to ask for the pieces. A billiard table is said to be in one home. The bar is rumored to be in Meridian. Stone columns from the building have been shipped to the



Greg Kreller / IPT

Part of the Dewey Palace steam building is still standing near Second Street South and 11th Avenue South in downtown Nampa.

William Dewey

- Born in Massachusetts in 1823
- Family moves to rural upstate New York
- Father dies in an election-day fight
- Runs away from home as a teenager
- Works on the Erie Canal in Buffalo, N.Y.
- Saves money and owns a stable, blacksmith shop and arcade for moving pictures
- Has a wife, who dies giving birth to first child
- Has a second wife, who dies giving birth to second child
- Leaves New York in 1850 to go to San Francisco, leaving children with a sister
- Gets malaria and has to recover a year in Latin America
- Goes to Virginia City, Nev., and loses money on mining claims
- Walks from Nevada to North Idaho mining claims, where he remains unsuccessful
- Goes to new mining claims in Owyhee Mountains called Ruby City, where he thinks goods are overpriced
- Starts to build Silver City, where his mercantile and other stores replenish his riches
- In 1865, marries Mary, last name unknown, a hurdy gurdy girl.
- Mary gives birth to son, Ed, in 1869.
- Mary dies on Christmas Day in 1872 of unknown illness.
- On a visit to San Francisco, he courts Isabel Hagen, an Irish girl, also known as "Belle."
- They marry in 1875. He is 52 and she is 20.
- The couple has three children, one of whom dies at age 3.
- Drawn into an ambush, Dewey shoots and kills a man in Silver City.
- Convicted of murder and sentenced to 8 years in state penitentiary on Warm Springs Avenue
- Retrial overturned conviction, and served only 8 months
- Builds a railroad from Murphy to Nampa, and from Nampa to Emmett
- Negotiates to stave off Indian attack near Silver City
- Sells mining stock in Silver City operations and investigates building hotel in Boise
- Raises capital on East Coast and is told he's not wanted in Boise
- For \$250,000, begins building 80-room Dewey Palace Hotel in Nampa in 1900.
- Dies in 1903, leaving land holdings to Belle and children.

American South.

The community has little left, Miller said. "The Dewey Palace Hotel is gone," she said, "and this is all we have."

Canyon County Historical Society

1200 Front Street
Hours: Tues. - Fri 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Sat. 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
467-7611
www.canyoncountyhistory.com

Police investigate fatal collision

BOISE — At approximately 10:30 p.m. Friday, two vehicles collided head-on, on State Highway 21 at milepost 19, resulting in one fatality, the Idaho State Police reported.

A driver in a black and white Ford F150 pickup, going southbound on SH 21, was attempting to pass another vehicle, also going southbound on SH 21. While attempting to pass, the black and white Ford hit a green Ford pickup that was going

northbound head on. The driver of the green Ford was transported to Saint Alphonsus Hospital and released. The driver of the black and white Ford was pronounced dead at the scene. The victim was not wearing a seat belt. The driver of the green Ford was wearing a seat belt.

The victim of this crash, driving the black and white Ford F150 was Garrett Sabatino Guidi, a 52-year old man of Boise. The other driver in the green Ford F350 was Todd Earl Smith, a 34-year-old man from Boise. Notification was made to the victim's family by the Boise County Coroner's Office.

Crash injures Boise bicyclist

BOISE — James Eidam of Boise was riding his bicycle southbound down Bogus Basin Road when he lost control and crashed. His bicycle continued, unoccupied, into the northbound lane of Bogus Basin Road where it collided with a gray 1992 Ford Pickup driven by Doug Poulson of Boise. Eidam was transported to St. Lukes downtown for his injuries. Eidam was not struck by the vehicle.

The crash was still under investigation Sunday by Trooper S. Langton and Trooper E. Robertson.

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Bluegrass bands including: Chicken Dinner Road, The Buckhorn Mountain Boys, The Heavensound Bluegrass Band, Hotire, Dawgwood, The Grangeville Bluegrass Company, Public Radio, and Midnight Flyer.
Free Gospel jam on Sunday morning, camping and jamming at Kiwanis Park, food vendors and workshops. Workshops for children learn about bluegrass music and instruments. A Martin D-16 guitar will also be given away with proceeds going to the ISBA.
\$10/Show for Friday and Sunday — \$15/Show on Saturday
Weekend pass \$25 — 1pm & 6pm

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