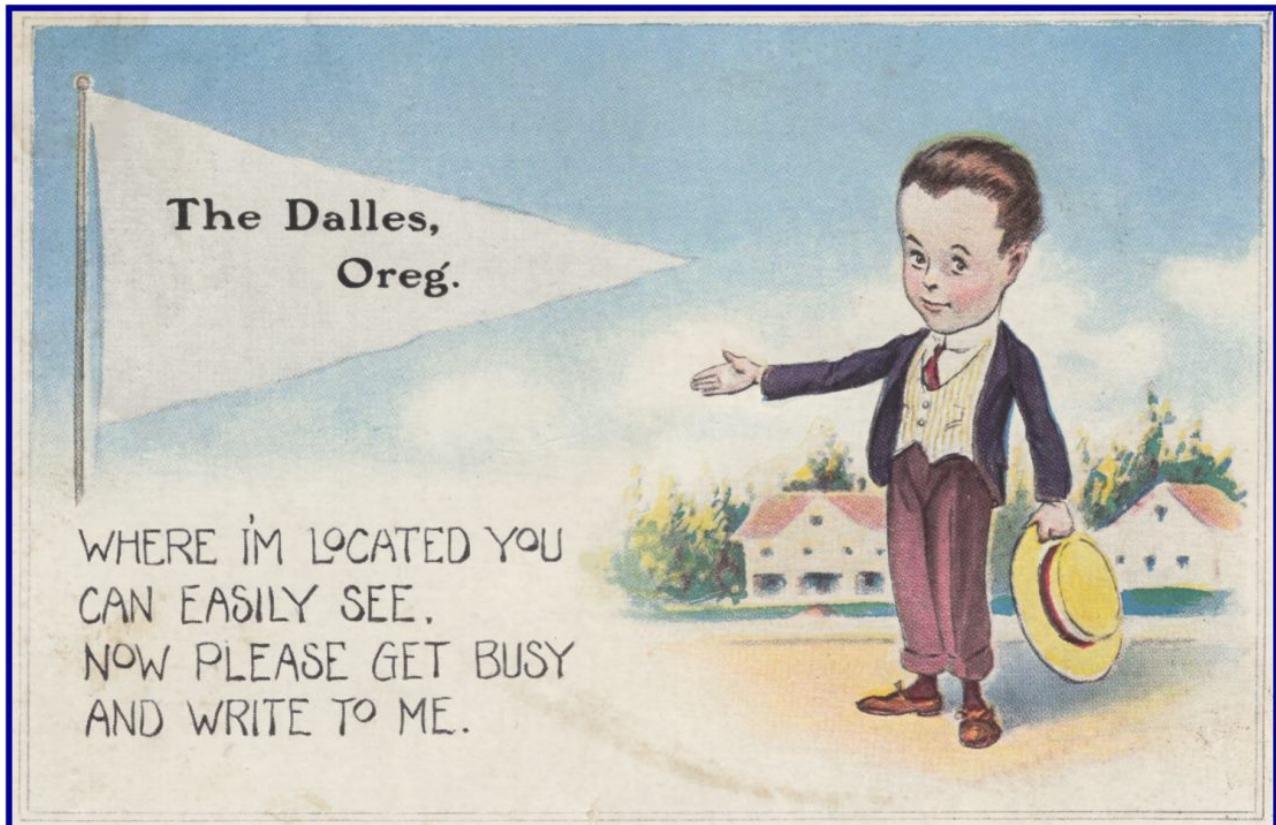




WEBFOOTER EXTRA

March 2022

Daniel Handley and the Umatilla House in The Dalles, Oregon



Pennant postcard from The Dalles, Oregon circa 1910, courtesy of Stephen Kenney.

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Daniel Handley and the Umatilla House in The Dalles, Oregon

By Bill Beith



Photo of The Dalles Oregon showing the Baldwin Opera House, the building closest to the center, the Umatilla House, large white building in the back and the Columbia Hotel, circa 1906. A similar photo from the 1890s showing these buildings appeared with a train in the February 2022 issue of The Webfooter.

Daniel Handley was the half-owner of the Umatilla House in The Dalles. The Umatilla House hotel was built in 1857. It was bought by Major Daniel Handley and Colonel N B Sinnott in 1860. The terms "Major" and "Colonel" were strictly honorary names given prominent citizens of that era. A fire consumed the hotel in 1878. Immediately thereafter, Handley and Sinnott built another hotel. However, it burned down in a major fire that burned most of the business area of The Dalles before it was through. The two men mortgaged and borrowed heavily to build again, this time it was an even fancier hotel. The new Umatilla House Hotel was known as the "best hotel west of Minneapolis and north of San Francisco." It had 140 rooms including five large "penthouse" types and could handle 400 guests.

Following is a quote from Fred Lockley who wrote for the Oregon Journal. "Both Hanley and Sinnott were from Ireland and they possessed a high degree of the spirit of hospitality. Sinnott was a "black republican" while his partner was a "dyed-in-the-wool" democrat. Handley weighed over 300 pounds and was a liberal patron of his own table and bar. Before the hotel was finished, another fire swept that part of the city and once more the Umatilla House was a pile of smoking ashes."



Real photo postcard view of the Umatilla House in The Dalles circa 1905.

Lockley continues, "Undaunted by this second disaster, they at once built an even larger hotel, which was opened in 1879, with 127 rooms, a large lobby and a porch along the entire front of the building. It was located on the bank of the Columbia River and the first place the passengers of the steam boats headed for was the Umatilla House. The dining room seated 200 and I have seen it filled with guests waiting for seats. The bar room could easily accommodate 200 and I have seen it filled with standing room at a premium.

Venison, wild goose, and Royal Chinook salmon were some of the specialties of the Umatilla House. Scores of balls have been held in the dining room and hundreds of weddings have been celebrated in the ladies' parlor. For a score of years it was considered "the thing" for the bride and groom to meet at the Umatilla House to be married and then celebrate the event with a wedding breakfast or luncheon, followed by a trip on the boat to Portland for a wedding journey."

Notice that Lockley says 127 rooms instead of 140; sources differ. A letter written in 1890 to John Handley, brother of Daniel Handley regarding Daniel's death is transcribed on page 4.

The Dalles Oregon
November 19th 1890

John Handley Esq
Scranton Pa
Sir

It is my painful duty to inform you of the death of your brother Daniel Handley, which occurred last evening about nine o'clock.

The Dalles Oregon
November 19th 1890

John Handley Esq
Scranton PA

Sir,

It is my painful duty to inform you of the death of your brother Daniel Handley, which occurred last evening about nine o'clock.

The immediate cause of death was suffocation, caused by the encroachment of enlarged viscera upon the lung space. He was sixty-five and a half inches around the waist. This great size was due to an enlarged liver, stomach, and an excessive deposit of fat, together with a condition of general dropsy. I will not dilate upon his physical infirmities, but rather tune to his moral traits, before consigning his memory to (Selina?) and the past.

Mr. Handley was a friend of mine. For almost twenty years, I lived at the Umatilla House. We had an intimate and varied association together. We never had a cross word or an ill feeling towards each other. I always found him princely in his financial and general business dealings. He was too lavish and magnanimous in his nature for most of those whom he encountered. He was a big man in heart and body. He died resigned and unterrified. His wife attended him with untiring devotion and the inquiry came from all Clapes (places), "how is the Major today?" I think of no one just now whose loss would be so universally regretted. He is to be buried Saturday Nov 22nd.

His business affairs are in a bad shape. He leaves ample means to keep his wife comfortable for the remainder of her life, if it is not wasted or stolen from her. Estates however are often badly managed in this Country before they reach the rightful hands.

My advice and good wishes will be at Mrs. Handley's command and any further information in regard to Mr. Handley's affairs will be cheerfully given you.

I am respectfully yours,

Wm Shackleford MD, Attending Physician upon Mr. Handley



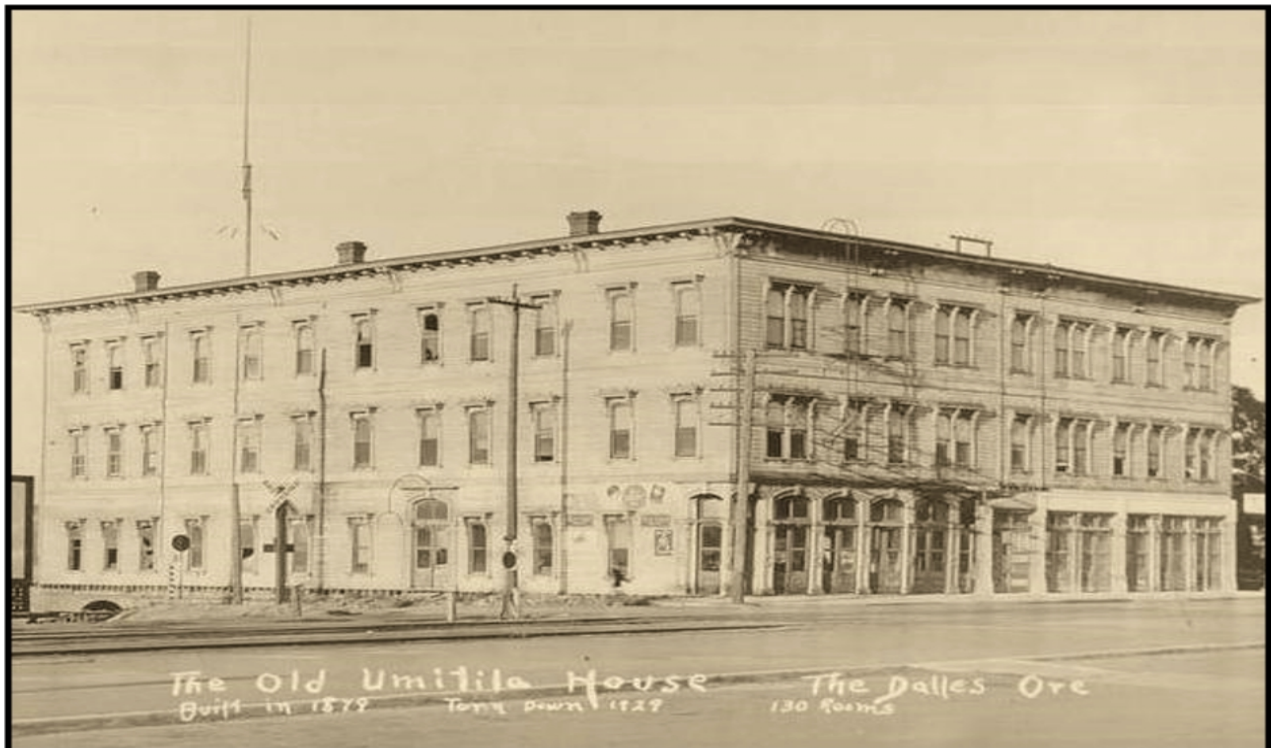
Real photo postcard of the lobby of the Umatilla House in The Dalles, circa 1905.



Real photo postcard of the interior of the Umatilla House in The Dalles, circa 1905.



Real photo postcard of the dining room at the Umatilla House in The Dalles, circa 1905.



Real photo postcard of the Umatilla House in The Dalles, before being torn down in 1929.

This article first appeared in Volume 41, no. 1, the Summer 2021 issue of Oregon Country Magazine. Photos of the Umatilla House are courtesy of the PNWPHS (Pacific Northwest Postal History Society) photo collection held by Ray Palmer in Sheridan.



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