

Lake ~~Hotel~~ *Historic District*
Yellowstone National Park
Southwest of Lake Junction
Lake
Teton County
Wyoming

HABS No. WY-121

HABS
WYO
20-LAK,
1-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

PHOTOGRAPHS

Historic American Buildings Survey
Rocky Mountain System Support Office
National Park Service
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225-0287

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
LAKE HOTEL

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Location: Lake Hotel, .5 mile east of Grand Loop Road and 1.3 miles southwest of Lake Junction, Yellowstone National Park, Lake, Teton County, Wyoming.

Significance: As the oldest remaining hotel within Yellowstone National Park, Lake Hotel reflects the changes in visitor needs since its opening in 1891. It also represents the changes in architectural tastes over the years as reflected in the many additions and remodelings of the structure.

Description: Lake Hotel is an imposing Colonial Revival structure that faces south on the shore of Yellowstone Lake. It is a three and one half story structure aligned on an east-west axis. The facade facing the Lake extends for nearly 700 feet. The original central portion of the hotel is a three story structure with a gable roof. Extending from this is an East Wing which also is three stories with a slightly lower gable roof. At a slight angle from the main structural alignment is the far Eastern Wing. This wing has a flat roof. To the west of the central structure is a two story wing with an octagonal plan which also has a flat roof. Extending southward from the central facade is a Solarium which is a one story semi-octagonal wing with a flat roof. A flat roofed porte cochere structure balances the south facade opposite of the Solarium. The entrance to the original section of the hotel is flanked by tall Roman Ionic Porticoes and includes small balcony projections as well as balustrades. The entire hotel structure is painted yellow with white trim. It has weatherboard walls and wood-shingle roofs and rests upon a concrete foundation.

Behind the Hotel stands the Boiler House. It is an irregularly shaped structure that is one story with a gable roof. The walls are of beveled clapboard siding and have vertical corner trim. Two smokestacks protrude through the roof. It's total dimension is about 120' x 65'.

To the northeast of the Hotel is the Girl's Dormitory. It is a rectangular building with three sections. The central section has a slightly gabled wooden-shingled roof while the two wings have flat roofs. The structure has two stories and wood clapboard siding. It has a concrete foundation. The central entrance has a gabled portico supported by round double columns.

The Old Boat House is directly on the shore of Yellowstone Lake to the southwest of the Hotel. It is a one story L-shaped structure with beveled clapboard siding and exterior log framing. It has a concrete foundation and a gable roof with wooden shingles. The dimensions are 68'6" x 117' with the L extension measuring 41'3" x 22'3". The structure is in poor condition.

History: In 1889, the Yellowstone National Park Company under the leadership of Charles Gibson began construction on the Lake Hotel. Due to problems with getting supplies to the remote location, the building wasn't finished until 1891. The original Lake Hotel was a three story structure with a gabled roof that, on the whole, resembled an army barracks. The Hotel became an instant success and additions were soon necessary as tourists came to the park by rail and stage.

These additions were undertaken in 1901 and completed in 1903. Under the guidance of architect Robert G. Reamer, the central structure received Colonial Revival detailing. An East Wing was also added to the structure. This wing extended to an Ionic Portico at which an addition wing went at a right angle to the north. This North Wing was eventually demolished in 1950.

Between the years of 1918 and 1919 the Hotel remained closed due to World War I. However, following the war, tourists began to arrive by automobile in increasing numbers. This necessitated further expansion of the lodging facilities. In 1922 and 1923, the East Wing was extended at a slight angle from the facade. In 1923 the present Boiler House was built and in 1924 the Girl's Dormitory was added. The Yellowstone Boat Company built the Old Boat House (different than the Lake Hotel Boat House) in 1926 under architect Fred T. Wilson. The Boat House catered to visitors at the Hotel. In 1928 the Solarium was added and the West dining room extended. In addition, a two story West Wing was added for additional rooms. The Main Lobby was also extended to the north.

The Lake Hotel was closed again from 1933 until 1936 due to the Great Depression. Following this closure, the Yellowstone Park Company began construction of a series of cabins and cottages to the northeast of the Hotel. However, the complex was closed once again from 1942 until 1946 due to World War II.

Tourism increased and General Host, Inc. bought the holdings of the Yellowstone Park Company. In the 1960's and early 1970's the Hotel's condition deteriorated rapidly under the management of General Host. In 1979, the National Park Service and TW Recreation Services bought out General Host and undertook restoration of the complex. In 1984 the interior was completely rehabilitated, stressing the appearance of the Hotel during the 1920's. In 1989 and 1990 the exterior of the Hotel was restored. In 1991, the Hotel celebrated its centennial birthday by being placed on the National Register of Historic Places. It remains as one of the finest hotels in Yellowstone National Park today.

Sources: Culpin, Mary and Wheaton, Rod, "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Lake Hotel," National Park Service, 1991.
Tenney, Susan A., "National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form: Historic Resources of Yellowstone National Park; Partial Inventory - Lake District," National Park Service, 1984.

Historian: Michael J. Smith, HABS Historian, 1996.

ADDENDUM TO:
LAKE HOTEL
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