

# 72 years serving Steamboat Springs



**as:** Albany Hotel  
hospital  
sanitarium

post office  
variety store  
grocery  
second-hand store  
ceramic shop  
barber shop

3 electrical service shops  
general store  
pool hall  
library  
movie house  
residence house  
Odd Fellows Hall  
dance hall

drama theatre  
restaurant & bar

and

historical landmark

# THE CAMEO

By Melanie Grillo



Built in 1904 by Ernest Campbell, the venerable old building at 6th and Lincoln in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, The Cameo is one of the finest buildings of its time. This historical landmark, now commonly known as "The Cameo" has seen this community come and go since it was built 72 years ago, originally The Albany Hotel.

Maggie Stees, almost 84 year resident, remembers "The old fellow at the depot that used to meet the train all the time screamed in a screechy voice, 'Free bus to the Albany!'. His name was Mr. Reedy, his daughter was my teacher, and he had a long white beard and drove a horse and buggy. There were no automobiles at that time, and he used a sled in the winter. But The Albany wasn't the only hotel, there was also the Sheridan and the Onyx Hotels."

Steamboat Springs was a growing community, badly in need of a hospital. Dr. Willett, resident doctor, realized the potential of The Albany being a possible local hospital location. The first hospital in town was located on the top of the present day Cameo. Dr. Willett's dream came true, even though at times he

had to pay rent for the building out of his own pocket.

Clay Munson, Steamboat old timer, said, "Well, upstairs Doctor Willett had a few rooms, because there was no hospital in the town at all, and he rented the upstairs. It was kinda a night shift hospital where he had available rooms. Oh, I suppose, it held about four or five people, that's all. Then they got the one where the junior high band is now. He had about six rooms, an operating room and a little office downstairs, and he ran that up until they built the present hospital. He was a very wonderful man, Dr. Willett."

After the hospital and sanitarium were moved spaces were rented to other occupants for businesses. At the back of the second floor, the Neitz family lived for four or five years while Mr. B. F. Neitz was the postmaster for the post office. The post office was on the west half of the main floor. Maggie Stees remembers the "slot in the door" for dropping letters off at the post office. She also told us, "After they moved the post office Mr. Neitz had a general store there."



Dr. Willett in front of the hospital, 1915.



Clay Munson recalls, "There were two postmasters, both had a variety store in part of it. It had everything in it for a short time. Once they even had a picture show there for a while." Dorothy Wither declared lack of memory about The Cameo building, but mentioned, "When I was a kid we walked down these stairs through a long dark hall and went to the picture show there. As a kid, it didn't impress me that much."

For more than twenty-five years Pearl Colley was the public librarian for the town library. The section occupied by the library had been the ex-post office. Mrs. Webber, one time building resident, said, "Our children used it a lot. There were people going in and out all the time...lots of traffic. I don't think it had as many volumes of books as it does now though. But of course, it wasn't large enough, and I think they discarded a lot of the old books."

"Story books they had all kinds, all they could get at that time. It was a great place for the kids to go. They'd sit and read and enjoy. Oh, and Mrs. Colley, she could grow most anything. Flowers, flowers, flowers. You see, the building had a high front and lots of room for all her plants, but, of course, it's all been taken off now," tells Maggie Stees.

Another local long time rancher, Bill May, recalls, "Mrs. Colley loved nice house plants. The library was full of them. When you went in the front door, it was like going into a jungle. As soon as the snow went off on the south side of the building which was about April 1st, Mrs. Colley would set out young cabbage and pansy plants the whole length of the building. She must have started millions of little cabbage plants. Every one in the country bought their cabbage plants and pansies from her, when they got ready to plant their gardens."

The Cameo has housed so many different things, "Also there was a variety store for a while," says Clay Munson, "Goldstein ran that, and, like I say, there were several things, a little grocery was there for a while, and a woman had a second hand shop. There seemed like there were a dozen different things in part of the building." There was once a ceramic shop, and a barber shop in there. Nick Calorous had a radio shop; a guy named Earl had a grocery; Chris Hanks had a general store with "general everything from hardware to dishes".

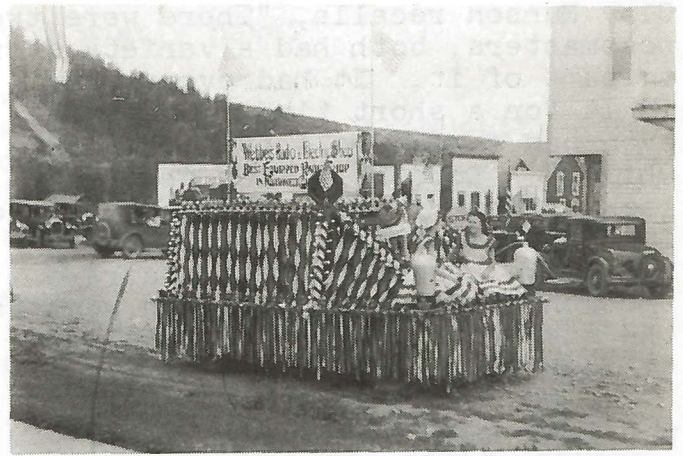
Walt Webber and his wife, business owners and residents, lived and worked in the mature and now state-ly building for nine years. Mr. Webber had some first hand experiences to tell about, "Well, the Cameo building is a really old building. It was a long time back when we had our store over on Seventh Street, and I couldn't make it there. The Odd Fellows had the building and they were in difficulty also. They had to have some help, so I told them I'd take care of the building for the rent."

The Odd Fellows and Webbers made a deal, and in 1929 the Webbers moved into The Cameo, known then as the "Odd Fellow Building". Mrs. Webber explained, "It was during the depression when everything was downhill. Walt had his little electrical shop in the front of the building, and we had the apartments in the back of the building. We lived on the west side, and Walt would worked at his electrician business in the day, and at night he would take care of the building and work on radios. It was hard times."

With proud feelings Mr. Webber chimed in, "I borrowed \$200 and put the petitions in and made it into rooms downstairs. I had the shop in the front right end, and there were two big windows, so I could see out good. I put a counter in to wait on people. I had a motor



generator set that I charged batteries with. The radios then were run with batteries and had to have six volt batteries. John Wright had the building next door to us, but they were charging batteries with a rectifier. I had a unit with a generator, pure direct current. I charged batteries for, I don't how many people. They'd bring their batteries in, and I'd charge them 75 cents a battery. The charge would last a lot longer when you charged with pure direct current. I've got it yet, that generator, in the basement, and that's one of the keepsakes I've got."



Float- Webber's Radio & Electric Shop in 1929 parade on Lincoln St.



This is the Webber's electrical shop. It should be mentioned that the Webber's started the roving Christmas tree in Steamboat. Mrs. Webber made all her own candy to give away.

"I took care of the building, and there was a dance hall upstairs. Had a good floor in it, and they had lots and lots of dances. During that time Hanks and I put a new ceiling in the building. Celotex pattern. We put that ceiling in there because it made it quieter, and people could hear better too."

Maggie Stees seems to think that the floor was about to fall in, "It was a dance place for a long time," she says, "It began to get weak, and the floor got awful shakey. Oh, but they had some nice lively old-fashioned dances. We had a big time!"

Walt Webber continues his tale,



" I took care of that dance floor all the time and kept it polished. I used corn meal on the floor instead of the dance wax, because there's so much oil in the meal. It made it noisy and slick, but people liked it better to dance on. We'd dance on it three or four rounds, and then somebody would brush it off, so people wouldn't fall down. If you'd leave it on for too long, it'd be too slick."

Mrs. Webber added to the story, "The dances they'd come and have to pay usually about a dollar. They had fiddle music, piano, and an orchestra. Dresses were not as short as they are now, about to the middle of the calf. The Rebeccas and the Odd Fellows had dances quite regularly, and other people had dances there too. It was really the best dance hall in town at that time. The Seas used to play up there, all kinds of music. "

Maggie Stees told us, "My husband was the caller. They had fine square dances there. Also Calla's husband, Henry Apple, played the mouth harp (harmonica) and guitar, and Elmer Doerr was quite a musician too."

"THERE IS NOTHING WHICH HAS YET BEEN CONTRIVED BY MAN BY WHICH SO MUCH HAPPINESS IS PRODUCED AS BY A GOOD TAVERN OR INN!"

From BOSWELL, Life of Johnson, March 21, 1776

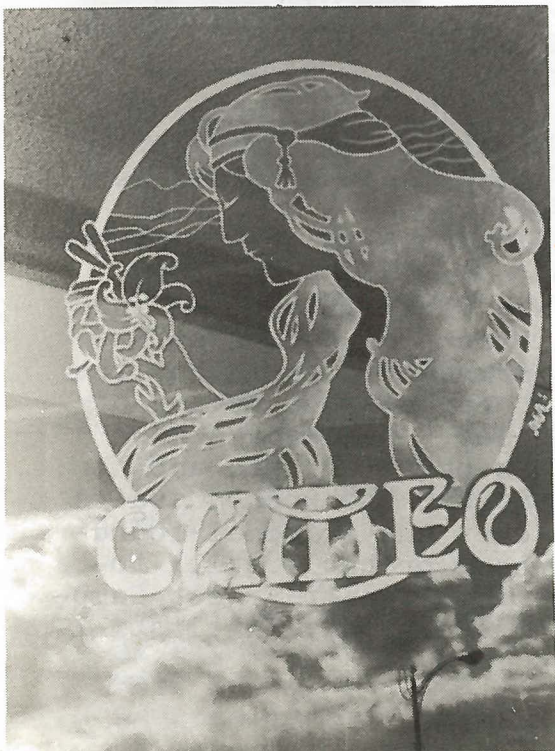


Sideview of the restaurant after remodeling last spring.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Besides being an "eaterie" and "drinkerie" The Cameo seems to have taken over as a local hang out since Don Barrett and Bruce Polich bought it seven years ago. Still the 72 year old building is quite a center for community happenings. Year round commonly seen at the Cameo are rugby, softball and tennis players "belting" down a cool one after a hard game. Construction workers and farmers "belly up" to the bar together; newcomers to town drop in asking about places to live; and many nine to five workers stop in for "just one" on their way home, not to mention the avid skier who shares his "fall" of the day with friends.

The Cameo has tried to change its image in recent years by renaming itself The Goode Sport, but the historical building and customers who patronize it today refuse to recognize any name other than the Albany Hotel, the Odd Fellow Building, or The Cameo.



Reflection of beautiful Colorado sky on etched class window.



Many Steamboaters today don't realize the historical past of the Cameo. We gathered the following quotes from recent newcomers who frequent this local establishment.

"It's good to reminisce about the place you know, something that's been a part of your life."

"The Goode Sport was a real disaster, wrong place, wrong time. They should have just fixed and cleaned it up, not changed the name."

"People have left their laundry next door over night because they came in for just one drink."

"I just know all the prices."

"It is a center of a lot of activity."

"There is a lot of dangling conversation and supercilious smiles."

"I built a cabin once for Bucci and told him to go the the Cameo and pay my tab, and that would take care of my wages."

"I ran the place for Polich, but we all thought it belonged to us."

"It's a get together place. Cruise into town on Friday night, and you'll know someone there."

"The Cameo is a place to drink, a drinking man's bar. The pool table was okay, but the t.v. must go."

"I think they do good, just seeing people come and go."



Don Toy, present manager of The Cameo bar.



Restaurant

The restaurant today keeps up with the times with the best in home cooked foods at breakfast, lunch and dinner. Many town policies and community decisions have been decided over eggs benedict, teriyaki chicken, or just a fresh cup of coffee. Plants abundantly hang from the ceiling, perhaps in memory of Mrs. Colley. And many a town drunk has over-indulged and stumbled down the wooden stairs which cover the original foundation where probably still today the initials of Ernest Campbell and the Albany Hotel still remain.