

# **The North Side Inn**

## **By Sandra VanHoozer**

**Edited by Arlen B. Crouch May 29, 2008**

The barren desert stretched uninvitingly from the foot hills of the North Mountains to the rugged rim of the Snake River Canyon and beyond.

But to Jerome Kuhn and Wendell Kuhn, the opportunity was a once in a lifetime chance; to build a town straight from the dust of the earth; to construct a reality built in their minds.

The two brothers were from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, millionaires in their day. They created the North Side Land & Water Co. and the South Side Land and Water Co and what is now Twin Falls County was known as the South Side tract and Jerome County the North Side tract.

The year 1907 was the beginning. The transaction involving the original town site property took place March 19, 1907. At that time, unused Northern Pacific railroad scrip was sold to D. E. Moulton for \$10,257.26 involving 1,282.17 acres of land. Moulton then turned his right, title and interest over to Jerome Hill Jr. who, in turn, assigned his interest to Twin Falls North Side Investment Co. operated by the Kuhn brothers.

The stage was set. Now people were needed to play the parts but the script unveiled a shaky plot and a risky ending. The star role would be played by the Milner Dam. Water was an absolute necessity for without water there would be no people and without people a dream would return to the dust from which it could have been born.

The Milner Dam, located northeast of the present town of Jerome, was completed, bringing the Kuhn brothers one step closer to their dream turned reality.

On October 1, 1908, ground was broken beginning the construction of the hotel "Idaho" later called the "The North Side Inn." It was dramatic; a large piece of fine art suddenly visible across a dry wasteland.

The purpose of the "North Side Inn" was to entertain prospective buyers for the North Side tracts. An expensive purpose well worth the time and effort.

The "North Side Inn" passed through several hands before her death in 1967. In 1909, a contract was drawn between the Twin Falls North Side Investment Co. and Pete Bethune stating the new ownership but the contract was never recorded and ownership returned to the Investment Co. roughly three months later.

In the late 1930's the hotel passed into the hands of Alfred Snowball Letham shortly after the addition of the North Side Inn apartments. Also, at this time Willard Wood built a café to the south side of the hotel called "Wood Cafe" but it meant the removal of the elegant veranda and slow painful destruction of the fabulous hotel.

The third owner was a group of Jerome men headed by Dave L'Herisson know as Investment Inc. The men bought the hotel to prevent its closing. But the splendor had diminished and the walls were crumbling and the "North Side Inn" faced her death. The town of Jerome mourned in 1961, Investment Inc. leased the hotel out to Larry and Louise Fleming. Everyone knew it would not be long. Maintenance on the old structure had become difficult and the new interstate highway had decreased business.

The day arrived. In 1966, Investment Inc. sold the hotel to Jacobson's Co. out of Salt Lake City. Progress won the final battle. On July 3rd, the grand old "North Side Inn" crashed to her death. It seemed as if the whole town was there to watch. Those who enjoyed moving ahead gave mellow rejoicing and those who still clung to the beautiful past, shed sorrowful tears.

The Kuhn brothers created a dream. Progress destroyed it. Now a bank and café stand leaving no trace of what once was. Only memories etched the minds of those who had seen the birth.

The "North Side Inn" had been a prosperous business. In its early days, stage coaches would stop and when vehicles came into existence, the hotel became a bus depot. "Back in the good old days", as Mrs. W. A. Peters recalls. "The young people would sit on the veranda on Saturday nights enjoying each other company."

The "North Side Inn" had been a place of residence for school teacher and bachelors. It was a sort of show place drawing people from everywhere to admire the splendor and elegance. A hotel built from the minds of two brothers and dust of the earth and demolished by the hand of progress.