

The Davenport Hotel: The Pulsing Heart of Spokane

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ABSTRACT

Spokane: a small town nestled in the Pacific Northwest, revolutionized by economic prosperity into a jewel of Washington State, US. Spokane holds unique architectural features, specifically in masonry, shaped by environmental and economic factors at the end of the eighteenth century. After a devastating fire in 1889, rapid reconstruction efforts focused on masonry buildings with steel reinforcements due to their fire-resistant qualities. At the same time Spokane experienced significant growth as it became a stop on the railroads that connected the US Coasts. This allowed the new buildings to be constructed taller than ever before. One of these buildings is the historical Davenport hotel. The luxury Inn provided a place of rest for weary travelers. The hotel still stands tall along the Spokane skyline and provides a major masonry landmark.

In the mid 1980's economic challenges were felt harshly throughout downtown Spokane as growth declined. After a series of hardships in 1985 the Davenport filed for bankruptcy and its doors were closed. However, the hotel's legacy would not end there. Walt and Karen Worthy purchased the hotel and restored it to its former glory. In 2002 the Davenport was reopened, maintaining the original luxury as its grand opening in 1914. The revitalization of the Davenport marked another period of growth in Spokane, and allowed restaurants, entertainment venues, and shops to flourish.

The Davenport is an excellent example of a masonry building that has been pivotal for the economic well-being of its city. The effects of its revitalization show how preservation of historic buildings can provide fundamental change for the economy and prosperity of their context. This paper will focus on the challenges and solutions which arose during the renovation of this historic landmark.

KEYWORDS

Clay bricks, existing buildings, renovation, historical preservation, fire resistance.

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INTRODUCTION

The Davenport Hotel has a rich history and a story of revival which follows the growth of the city of Spokane. Spokane is located in the Northwest of the United States, in Washington State. It is surrounded by mountains, lakes, wetlands, and by the rolling hills of the Palouse. The Davenport Hotel, a tall masonry building, has been an integral part of downtown from its original construction and continues to be a landmark of the area. As seen in Fig. 1, the Davenport is centrally located in the heart of downtown surrounded by other historically significant masonry buildings like the steam plant. This prominent location contributed to the hotel's growth and cultural importance.

The construction of the Union Pacific railroad allowed for rapid expansion and growth of the United States in the end of the 1800s and the beginning of the 1900s. As Spokane became an important stop along this railroad, the city experienced similar growth during this time [1]. However, during this same period a devastating fire burnt down most of Spokane's downtown commercial district in 1889. Although this event was tragic, it provided Spokane with a clean slate to rebuild its core. Fire-resistance became a priority, leading to the construction of masonry buildings with steel framing, which allowed buildings to reach new heights. Within the rebuilding of the downtown came the rise of the Davenport Hotel [2].



Figure 1: Downtown Spokane Skyline with West Face of the Davenport Hotel (Photograph by Sara Ganzerli)

Louis Davenport started in the hospitality industry at his uncle's restaurant before it burned down in the fire. Davenport, sustained by his entrepreneurial spirit, welcomed the opportunity to rebuild and open his own restaurant after the fire. The venue gained popularity quickly. Davenport eventually purchased the property he had been leasing for his restaurant and the neighboring Wilson and Bellevue Buildings. With the help of famous architect Kirtland Cutter, Davenport's restaurant was re-designed displaying the Mission Style façade still seen today. As Davenport's growth and success continued, he was eventually able to open the Davenport Hotel in 1914. The twelve story Davenport Hotel utilized steel framing and masonry to achieve fire resistance. The Davenport became a luxury hotel for those traveling along the railroad and a symbol of Spokane's economic prosperity. Many famous celebrities and U.S. presidents, among which R. Nixon, J.F. Kennedy, and W.H. Taft, visited the hotel. It was even the first hotel to provide free ice to its guests. At the peak of its popularity, the Davenport contributed greatly to economic growth in Spokane and helped to revitalize the whole downtown area [3].

As the Davenport Hotel experienced hardships at the end of the 20th century, economic challenges were felt throughout downtown. Businesses started moving to the new Northtown mall or closing all together and Spokane's economic growth declined. As the Davenport Hotel risked permanent closure, investors Walt and Karen Worthy recognized the importance of restoring the hotel and acquired the property in 2000. The hotel was reopened in 2002 after multiple delays and costing almost 40 million dollars in reconstruction. The restoration preserved the original glory and luxury of the hotel when it opened in 1914. Following the re-opening of the hotel, downtown Spokane experienced economic growth through the return of businesses, restaurants and venues.

KIRTLAND CUTTER

Kirtland Cutter designed the Davenport to be the first hotel of its kind in the country [3]. His initial aspirations with the Davenport were even more complex, and more expensive than the impressive design that was constructed. Cutter was one of the most prominent contributors to Spokane architecture. He designed many of the notable buildings and homes in the greater Spokane area. His projects include the Austin Corbin House, Campbell House, James N. Glover house, and the F. Lewis Clark House all of which are on the National Register [4]. He was originally from Cleveland, Ohio, although he moved to Spokane to be with a railroad magnate friend.

Kirtland Cutter left a lasting impact on Spokane beyond the historical Davenport and his work can be attributed to much of the revival of Spokane after the fire destroyed most of the downtown. He helped build a downtown impressive to visitors by creating grand buildings featuring brick and granite. The Cushing Building was one of his first projects and featured brick spandrels. Much of Cutter's work highlighted masonry as both a structural and aesthetic building material. This included the Spokane National Bank which featured granite in the base of the building to be able to hold up the brick facade, a brick building for E. L. Powell Grocery Company, and countless other buildings for various clients in Spokane ranging from mansions to commercial buildings [5]. Many of Cutter's projects still stand tall in the skyline of downtown Spokane and are iconic historical sites that still functioning today [6].

ORIGINAL CONSTRUCTION

Before the construction of the Davenport Hotel, there were initial renovations within the Davenport restaurant. There was a 990-square-foot ballroom built above the restaurant as a place to host larger events [7]. This ballroom is known as the Hall of Doges, Fig. 2, and finished construction in 1908. The ballroom was built to support itself featuring steel girders which connected to the rock foundation, and support cables

were added to prevent any potential disturbances dancing would cause on the restaurant below [3]. To begin the construction of the Davenport Hotel, the Pennington Hotel and Bellevue Building were connected to Davenport's restaurant.



Figure 2: Hall of Doges (Photograph by Ally Delaney and Alli Wilmarth)

The Marie Antionette Ballroom is another elegant ballroom that was constructed in the Davenport Hotel. The original Marie Antoinette Ballroom included French doors, a gallery that wrapped around the room, a chandelier, and 20-foot ceiling [8]. The architecture for the gallery was inspired by 18th century French architecture. The Marie Antionette room was not part of the original Davenport Hotel plans, but was added in the final stages of design along with a terrace garden [4]. The Marie Antoinette Ballroom still stands in the hotel today and can be seen in Fig. 3.



Figure 3: Marie Antoinette Ballroom (Photograph by Ally Delaney and Alli Wilmarth)

After multiple years of delay due to final touches on the design, the construction of the Davenport Hotel started in early 1913. By September 1914 the Davenport welcomed its first guests [4]. The construction boasted state of the art technology and techniques which were revolutionary for that time [7]. To set the foundation for the Davenport a 30-foot hole was excavated in the ground before the original 12 story steel frame was constructed [3]. This steel frame was completed with fire-proof-construction of masonry shown in the original Insurance Maps seen in Fig. 4 and is still seen in the exterior today [3].

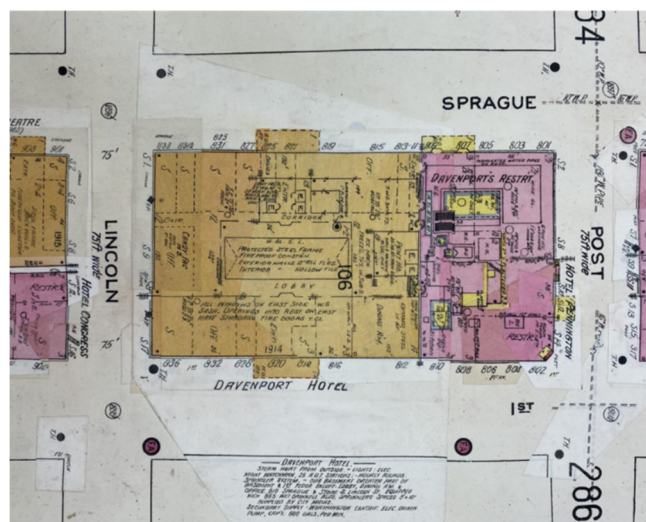


Figure 4: Diagram of the Historic Davenport Hotel found in Insurance Maps created by the Spokane Fire Department (from the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture (NMAC) Archives).

Due to the immense success of the Davenport, between 1917-1929, 133 additional guest rooms were added to the original construction [7]. In 1929, the South Tower of the Davenport was added to expand the design and keep up with the large demand of rooms once again [3]. In 1975, as one of the dominating buildings in the Spokane skyline, the Davenport Hotel was 14 stories with 400 rooms. Seventeen of the rooms were dedicated to ballrooms or rooms for other extravagant events [4].

ARCHITECTURE

The historic Davenport is comprised of two distinct bodies, Davenport's original restaurant and hotel. During the reconstruction, the mission style restaurant was annexed to the hotel to make it a singular body. In 1914, the original twelve-story tall Davenport hotel was considered Baroque style architecture. The main body of the hotel is considered late 19th and 20th Century Revival Style with Florentine detailing and a Sullivanesque building style which breaks the building into three main sections [4]. The hotel stands tall above the surrounding buildings utilizing a steel frame and masonry to reach these heights as seen in Fig. 5. There are many decorative masonry elements that are just as note-worthy as the building. The street level of the building boasts a façade with details which are reflected even at the highest points of the two towers. The masonry is composed of bricks with contrasting colors, expertly laid, to obtain a pleasant aesthetic effect showing attention to detail. At the top of the towers, windows are framed by rounded arches and decorative masonry ornaments, which also utilize the placement of the bricks to create depth and a different type of contrast in the masonry [9].



Figure 5: Exterior Masonry Detailing of Historic Davenport Hotel of Corner Facing South Lincoln Street and Sprague Avenue (Aerial Photograph by Ally Delaney and Alli Wilmarth)

The mission-style façade of the Davenport is in the Eastern section of the block. This displays a Spanish revival style, which contrasts the main body and towers of the hotel. This unique architecture made the Davenport's original restaurant noticeable and gave it more visibility as the style varied largely from the surrounding block. As seen in Fig. 6, the Mission façade covered a plain looking brick building with stucco, various ornaments/detailing and a red tile roof to contrast the neighboring buildings and further the high-end reputation of the Davenport Hotel [3].



Figure 6: Mission Façade of Historic Davenport Facing North Post Street (Aerial Photograph by Ally Delaney and Alli Wilmarth)

ORIGINS OF THE DAVENPORT MASONRY

The Davenport veneer primarily consists of vibrant terra cotta and brick. This brick was acquired from outside of Spokane in the small, but historically important masonry town of Clayton. Here stood the Washington Brick and Lime Company Clayton plant. The plant was built in 1893 right beside a large pit of clay [10].

The company grew and provided masonry for different buildings in Spokane with the Davenport as the most notable. The Davenport received terra cotta, as well as the brick for the face of the building from the Washington Brick and Lime Company. The brick of the Historical Davenport was preserved and restored during the renovation of the Davenport. Therefore, much of the original brick and terra cotta is the same or very similar to the brick produced by the Washington Brick and Lime Company [10].

RECONSTRUCTION

The retrofitting of the Davenport Hotel took two years with the help of multiple engineering and construction companies. The main engineering firm that worked on this project was DCI Engineers. The large components of the reconstruction included increasing the luxurious amenities, salvaging the Hall of Doges, and the construction of the fourteenth floor [11].

Before planning the construction, the Worthy's traveled across the country to discover what would make the Davenport a successful hotel. They determined that the hotel rooms needed to be larger. They downsized their number to 300 from almost 400, also making the rooms more modern and upscale. The only room that was preserved as close as possible to the original was the circus room. Louis Davenport was a fan of the circus, and he was the one who originally created the circus room. The original mural of circus characters was restored and there were colorful balloon lights added to the ceiling [3].

Almost all of the masonry on the Davenport structure was preserved. All the masonry associated with the Pennington was removed as part of the demolition. Demolition work associated with the Davenport was all selective in nature. Including removing all finishes and non-load bearing walls throughout the residence floors [12]. This substantially decreased the mass of the building allowing a better resilience against earthquake forces and achieving an acceptable level of safety against seismic events [13].

An important aspect of the project was the demolition and replacement of the elevated sidewalks around the building [12]. The walls of the basement level go up to the curb of the street. The sidewalks act a roofing for the basement level where it extends beyond the perimeter of the building. Therefore, the sidewalks must be water tight to prevent infiltrations to the lower level [14].

Other components that were demolished are: the concrete roof top pool and the floor in the basement for installation of the new pool. The Pennington, a building annexed to the Davenport, was a complete structure demolition, after the Hall of Doges was cut out of the building and craned across 1st avenue for preservation to be reinstalled in the new building.

The Davenport consists of a concrete post and beam construction with unreinforced masonry walls at the exterior, stair shafts and elevator shafts. Interior construction consisted of framed plaster and terra cotta block walls throughout the residence floors. The Pennington was constructed of wood framing for all floors, walls and roof. Substantial retrofitting was needed in the mechanical, electrical, plumbing and fire suppression systems throughout the entire building. Very little structural upgrades were made to the Davenport outside of the exterior sidewalks and pool area. The Pennington was reconstructed utilizing a precast concrete system [12].

The arguably most impressive aspect of the Davenport reconstruction was the preservation of the Hall of Doges. The Hall of Doges was removed from the Davenport during reconstruction to ensure that the original architecture and beauty of the room stayed intact. The room was removed from the building with a crane and placed across the street to then allowed for the reconstruction of the rest of the Davenport Hotel. Walt Worthy came up with the creative idea to extract the Hall of Doges but fix the structural integrity by reframing the room. This preserved the timeless room, the beautiful venetian inspired architecture, and rich history [15].

Another aspect of the Davenport that was saved during the reconstruction was the cupola, or golden dome seen in Fig. 6. The cupola was built with steel and glass. During the reconstruction of the Davenport the cupola was removed and stored until being added back to the hotel at the end of reconstruction [3].

Most of the original Davenport masonry still stands tall with the hotel as seen in Fig. 7. An aspect of the reconstruction was checking the structural integrity of the building to ensure the safety of guests. The masonry of the Davenport was not used in the structural components of the building, so it was able to be preserved in the reconstruction. The masonry helps to show the history of the building and preserve the image that the Davenport has always had. The Davenport was added to the National Register of Historic Places in Spokane in 1975, which was essential to maintain the historical architecture and rich history of the Davenport [15].



**Figure 7: Renovated Davenport Hotel Standing Tall in Downtown Spokane from Frist Avenue
(Aerial Photograph by Ally Delaney and Alli Willmarth)**

The re-opening of the Davenport Hotel helped to revitalize the Spokane community. If it were not for the construction of Riverfront Park a couple years prior, the Davenport may never have been built [15]. In 2005, the area surrounding the Davenport Hotel became a Focus Zone. The goal of a Focus Zone is to increase economic growth, promote community and the beauty of Spokane [7]. In this zone, from 2003-2007 six buildings were rebranded or restored. This increased the economic development of Spokane. In 2006, the Worthy's opened a hotel across the street from the original Davenport Hotel, called the Davenport Tower. This building was designed with a completely different architectural style and was built using concrete [7].

CONCLUSION

In a city like Spokane with various striking, historic masonry buildings throughout the downtown, one of the most impressive and influential is the Davenport Hotel. The original construction of the hotel was revolutionary for its time using steel framing and masonry to create a stunning façade. The use of masonry was two-fold to provide architectural and fire resistance as the city was recovering from a devastating fire. Throughout the design and construction of the exterior and interior of the Davenport, there was a focus on luxury and an aim to be the most impressive on the West Coast. This was achieved through the work completed by Kirtland Cutter, a prominent architect, who had an attention to detail seen from each exterior masonry ornament to the elegant murals in the ballrooms inside the hotel. This paper provided an overview of the history of the Davenport, its impact on Spokane as a whole and how the masonry was a key component in the hotel's success.

This landmark of downtown Spokane was nearly lost due to various financial challenges and ownership changes. The Worthys prevented the doors from permanently closing and were able to restore the Davenport to its original glory allowing the legacy of grandness from the Davenport to continue. The hotel's history follows the rise and fall of downtown Spokane. The Davenport's renovation deserves to be credited with much of the recent growth in downtown Spokane.

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