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History Comes Alive at the Hotel Colorado

Submitted by [Sandy Bornstein](#) on Sun, 09/09/2018 - 00:28



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On September 15, [Glenwood Springs](#) will be celebrating the 125th anniversary of one of its landmarks, the Hotel Colorado. The town will come together by sponsoring a morning parade, a food court and beer garden, kid friendly activities, and historical tours. The local Ute tribe will be offering a morning blessing and an afternoon presentation. It will be a gala event for a hotel that opened its doors in 1893. **History will come alive at the Hotel Colorado in Glenwood Springs on that day, as well as for years to come.**



HISTORY COMES ALIVE AT THE HOTEL COLORADO



Hotel Colorado

Glenwood Springs is 160 miles west of Denver on I-70 and about 90 miles east of Grand Junction. Cars driving

from Denver will pass through Glenwood Canyon and the White River National Forest, a 16-mile stretch along I-70. In the summer months, outdoor enthusiasts will be thrilled with the rafting, kayaking, fishing, golfing, hiking, biking, and horseback riding opportunities. Glenwood Springs sits in a valley that is fed by both the Colorado River and the Roaring Fork River. In the vicinity, locals and travelers can dip into several hot springs that lure people from both near and far.



Glenwood Springs Hot Springs

By visiting Glenwood Springs, history lovers can travel back to the late 19th century. The Hotel Colorado's walls are filled with framed black and white photos, newspaper clippings, and cartoons. Artifacts from the 19th and early part of the 20th century are also on display. I chuckled when I looked at a faded image of President Theodore Roosevelt in the hot springs pool and reprinted political cartoons that were published while he was campaigning and during his presidential years.



Black and White Image of Hotel Colorado

A portrait of President Howard Taft from 1909 includes a comical remark. After being asked to take a dip in the vapor bath, he replied, "Bathing in public is not, if I may say so, my strong suit." He certainly did not share President Roosevelt's enthusiasm to go down a slide into the hot water.



President Theodore Roosevelt in the Hot Springs

Fans of President Theodore Roosevelt will enjoy the large collection of images that date back to 1905, when the hotel became the temporary home for the president while he participating in a multi-week hunting expedition. Even though the [hotel's website](#) claims that the concept of a teddy bear originated during that visit, the [National Park Service website](#) offers a very different version that predates President Roosevelt's visit to Colorado by a couple of years.

Like many other 19th century western towns, Glenwood Springs had a rough beginning until the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad began servicing the region. In 1887, the train ignited the town's prosperity. These train tracks went from Leadville, over Tennessee Pass, to Glenwood Springs and onto Aspen. A competing railroad, the Colorado Midland Railroad, eventually connected the now booming town of Glenwood Springs with Colorado Springs, Leadville, Basalt, and Aspen.



Iron Mountain Hot Springs

In the 1870s, Walter B. Devereux and his brothers, James and Horace, became wealthy in Aspen's mining camp. Walter Devereux was a graduate of both Princeton and Columbia Universities and was a mining engineer who managed the Aspen mines. After learning about the healing powers of the Yampah Springs, Devereux purchased ten acres, including the springs. The Ute Indians had protected the area until geologic explorers found the area in the 1860s. Devereux purchased the property from one of the explorers for \$125,000.

Devereux's intention was to build the largest hot springs pool in the world along with a world-class hotel modeled after the Villa De Medici in Italy. The Hotel Colorado opened in 1893 at a cost of \$850,000. Prominent individuals arriving for the opening witnessed an English fountain that sprayed water 185 feet into the air. According to one posted image, the original hotel lobby resembled a European hunting lodge that displayed animals throughout. Molly Brown was a frequent guest at the hotel. Today, a suite is dedicated to her patronage.

Across the street from the Hotel Colorado, a red sandstone bathhouse and lodge was completed in 1890. Visitors from around the world came by train to visit the hotel and spa complex for a few decades. By the 1920s, the popularity of the hotel and spa were starting to wane.

The shooting of the 1926 the silent movie, *The Great K & A Train Robbery*, drew some interest. The leading actor, Tom Mix, and actress Dorothy Dwan, along with the rest of the cast, stayed in the hotel. The cast and crew arrived by train. The film was shot in Glenwood Springs and along the Colorado River.

The property continued declining until the U.S. Navy operated the hotel as a convalescent hospital during World War II. Physiotherapists rehabilitated disabled soldiers and marines in the nearby hot springs. The U.S government also modernized the Hotel Colorado structure by rewiring the electricity, modernizing the plumbing, and running the new piping for a fire sprinkler system.

As less and less people used the train for travel, the hotel's popularity decreased. The ownership passed from one entity to another.

The Hotel Colorado was entered into the National Register of Historical Places in 1977.



Packer Parlor Organ from the early 20th Century on display in the Hotel Colorado

Today, travelers to Glenwood Springs can see history come alive at the Hotel Colorado. They can also take time

to visit other attractions, enjoy the outdoors, and take a dip in the largest hot springs pool in the world or relax at the nearby [Iron Mountain Hot Springs](#).



Iron Mountain Hot Springs

Sandy Bornstein, the *History Comes Alive Through Travel Editor* for Wandering Educators, has visited more than 40 countries and lived as an international teacher in Bangalore, India. Sandy's award-winning book, [May This Be the Best Year of Your Life](#), is a resource for people contemplating an expat lifestyle and living outside their comfort zone. Sandy writes about Jewish culture and history, historical sites, family, intergenerational, and active midlife adventures highlighting land and water experiences.

All photos courtesy and copyright Sandy Bornstein

Note: Sandy Bornstein received a complimentary one-night stay at the Hotel Colorado in August.

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