

Ace

by Ace Walden

Editor's note: Amidee K. "Ace" Walden was born in Grass Valley, California, May 17, 1907. At three years old his family moved to Walla Walla, Washington and then to Coeur d'Alene in 1911. Ace spent almost 42 years in banking and was manager of Idaho First National Bank. He and his wife Ellen were instrumental in founding the Kootenai Cancer Center, and the Walden House bears their name. Ace passed away October 23, 2010 at 103 years old. He was a long-time supporter of the Museum and upon his death left substantial donations to the Museum and other community organizations. These are excerpts from the first part of Ace Walden's autobiography.

An Easier Time

We arrived in Coeur d'Alene on June 12, 1911, in a boxcar. You shouldn't demean that method of travel in those years. In relation to the number of tickets purchased you were allotted space in the boxcar for furniture and other personal belongings and you had access to the service facilities on the train. There was an advantage to boxcar travel. You and some of your belongings arrived at your destination at the same time. Our freight car was shunted to a siding at the railroad "Y" in the general area east of Kootenai Medical Center.

We walked railroad tracks. We moved from the Great Northern tracks to the Inland Empire Electric Line tracks. We found that depot after going through the division between Blackwell Park and the City Park. We headed east up Sherman Avenue. There were no buildings between First Street and Second Street on the south side of Sherman Avenue. At the southwest corner of Sherman Avenue and Second Street there was a deep hole in the ground. There had been a hotel there. It was known as the triangle building. On the south side of Sherman Avenue between Second Street and Third Street in about the middle of the block there was a wide undeveloped area with sandy soil and scrubby trees and you could see a wide expanse of



Left: Percy "PB" Walden and A.K. "Ace" Walden on photographer's donkey at the Walden home at 1324 N. Third St., 1911. Now Runge Furniture. TrD-3-27

the lake through that opening. At Fourth Street and Sherman Avenue there were two tall buildings--the Wiggett Building and Wright-Stonestreet Building on the northwest corner and southeast corner respectively. Our group headed north on Fourth Street. The hill from Coeur d'Alene Avenue to Wallace Avenue seemed steeper then. We reached Harrison Avenue which was the northern city limits. On the northwest corner of Fourth Street and Harrison Avenue was a small grocery store green in painted color and white around the door and windows as a trim. Just north of that store there was a narrow diagonal path

through skinny trees to Third Street. We had arrived at our rented home--1324 Third Street. We had walked about four miles to get there. A direct route if we had inquired when we left the freight car would have shortened the journey to about one-half mile.

There are two things I especially remember about that day. PB (Ace's older brother) and I wore what we called bearskin coats. They were a brilliant red in color, woolly in texture, lined with some kind of leather or hide. They were given to us in more prosperous days. They were hot--especially in June but they were our year around outer garment for several years. Mother repaired them and mended them as they shrunk from full length to mackinaw size and disappeared. The other memory concerned a large, deep blocked-off hole in the ground at Fourth Street and Coeur d'Alene Avenue on the southeast corner. An opera house had been located there but there was a fire and no rebuilding. I could hardly wait to get down below the street level and see what I could discover.

My parents almost never talked about times when the living had been easier. My feeling is that present conditions were less painful if the past could be forgotten. It was as if nothing of importance took place before we arrived in Coeur d'Alene.

The day after our arrival Dad had a job loading wet slabs of rough green dimension lumber in a freight car on a spur of the railroad between First and Second Streets in the eight hundred block. The mill was classed as a one-man operation. The workday was twelve hours six days per week and the pay for unskilled manual labor ten cents per hour. He was given a raise to fifteen cents per hour in a few weeks. He also found employment as a janitor in a downtown store for two hours each day before he reported at the mill at six o'clock in the morning.

My mother made candy. The word got around the neighborhood and folks came to our place to make purchases. My Mother was also gifted with the use of a needle and thread. Ladies hired her to put initials, monograms, or simple designs on handkerchiefs, napkins, pillowslips and some other more personal items. Our kitchen stove was large and always hot and there were almost at any time four kettles on the top--two for Karo syrup, one for stew, and one for soup.

My Father built a root cellar along one side of the house. It was nothing more than a reinforced hole in the ground with a cover for the top. It served some of the purposes of a refrigerator. A chicken coop was constructed with wire and felled trees for an outline and some scrap lumber. A vegetable garden was prepared and planted. If water was needed it was carried from the house in a bucket. Between the chicken coop and the garden was our outdoor privy. Dad cut small

trees from near the house, limbed them, sawed them into lengths that would fit our stove, used an ax and a wedge on them and stacked the wood by the chicken coop.

We as a family were making progress. We got a rooster and some hens and had chickens and eggs to trade with a neighbor for milk--he owned a cow. Practically every Sunday Dad killed a chicken, PB and I plucked it, Mother cleaned and cooked it and with the fried chicken we had mashed potatoes from the garden with white gravy, Mom's homemade bread and some kind of pie that she baked. I wish that I had not been such a dumb son. Why didn't I tell my parents in just plain simple words how much I appreciated all the things they did for me and that I was aware of the hard work involved and I should have told them many times.

For some reason I never thought about hardships prior to first grade nor did I remember them. My parents in later years told me that the first few years in Coeur d'Alene presented problems.

In November 1911, the State of Idaho in its wisdom had decided that its qualified citizens would vote by counties to be "wet" or "dry." Kootenai County in a close vote decided to be "dry." That meant that alcoholic beverages would not be manufactured or sold in our county. There was an emergency clause in the resolution which made it law the next day. At least twenty places of businesses fronting Sherman Avenue were now closed or changed to tobacco shops or card rooms. The biggest building in Idaho north of Lewiston--The Coeur d'Alene Brewing Co.-- prepared to close because it could not produce beer. Those folks in our county who wanted booze would go elsewhere, usually Spokane, and bring back their supply. They could have it for their own use or entertainment in their own home without penalty. When locals got off the Electric Train carrying bulky brown paper sacks that everyone was sure contained alcoholics some wise guy might yell at someone he knew, "They put up asparagus in funny bunches, don't they." Where our town took a punch on the chin was in our recreation, vacation, and visitor segments. These people didn't want to be encumbered by bringing in things that they previously could purchase. If the liquor law was passed what other nuisance edict might be next? It was a dull time.

As for the Waldens we were making progress slowly. My mother made candy for sale now only on advance order and solely for the Christmas holiday and Valentine periods. Her needlework was more profitable and she was always busy with it. And, yes, I now had a baby sister. Erma Walden was born at home on March 17, 1912.

Things were less hectic for my father. He was now

working most of the time in the water at the west end of Sanders Beach. To get enough water pressure to reach the highest buildings in downtown for fire protection an intake was constructed for a reservoir on Tubbs Hill. Dad earned more money per hour and there were other privileges. He no longer was a janitor. When work on the intake was completed he was immediately hired to assist the millwright in the sawmill where the city parking lot is now. He worked on the top floor among the belts, pulleys and chains where it was constantly noisy. He was earning more dollars than at anytime since his arrival here. Thirty-five cents per hour for a ten-hour day was luxurious.

My older brother had an idea and in October 1913, he and I got started in the newspaper business. We sold them on the downtown streets of our town each weekday afternoon. School was dismissed at 3:00 o'clock and if we hurried we would be at Third Street Dock or Electric Dock when the train bringing the latest edition of the Spokane Daily Chronicle arrived at 3:20. My daily investment was 5 cents and I had the nickel tied in the corner of my handkerchief and stuffed in the watch pocket of my knickers. The other end was tied to the belt loop. Papers were 2-1/2 cents each and we sold them for 5 cents each. I did not have enough seniority to be given a protected corner to sell from and for that reason I had to freelance and keep moving. I was not permitted to return unsold papers for credit. As soon as I sold two papers I bought others. I tried to make a profit of 20 cents each night and I did a little better than that. Father knew about our business venture and after a few weeks he gave us a lesson in economics. He remarked that the Waldens were a family group, that it cost money to maintain a home, and that all of us who had income should share that cost. He suggested that PB and I should place half of our earnings in a bowl on a shelf in the kitchen. We agreed. Then Dad made us a promise that the half we kept we could spend in any fashion that pleased us and there would be no questions asked by him or Mom. All agreements and promises were kept.

1914

My parents wanted a larger home. We moved to Five and One-Half Street, now Fifth Place, but only for a few months. In 1914 we moved to a two-storied house at 423 Foster Avenue. We had two apple trees and a cherry tree. Chicken coop facilities were better. I don't know if you are ready for this or not but we had the modern luxury of inside plumbing. We were much closer to the sawmill where Dad continued to work.

The lady had called at our house to see my mother a few times earlier in the week. I didn't know that she was a midwife nor did I know what a midwife did.

On July 14 she arrived early in the morning and was busy in the house. I didn't see Mom around and when I asked I was informed that she was resting. On the lady's instruction I was sent to our doctor's home with the message that Mom wanted to see him now. The doctor indicated that he would pack a few things in his car and be on his way. I made the report. I was given a new order--"Tell your father that your mother wants to see him immediately." I didn't move fast enough to please the midwife. She grabbed me, took down my knickers, slapped my bare bottom several times, and then commanded me, "Go and do as I told you." I went. This lady must have had much practice in spanking kids. She didn't waste a motion. And I hurt. My father asked no questions and we made it home mostly at a trot. Later that day our family was completed. I had a brand new brother--Mayo Kenneth Walden had arrived.

Our third grade teacher had a problem and she enlisted the aid of her entire class to solve it. This is the way she went about it. It is important because it is an excellent example in salesmanship. School continued until three o'clock but our teacher lived in St. Maries and since she spent weekends at home and used boat transportation she had to get to the boat on time and it left at three o'clock. She must leave the school at 2:45 every Friday. The first Friday she explained her difficulty and asked the assistance of every member of her class. Her plan was that every Friday one member of the class would take her place for that fifteen minutes. Each one of us would be the teacher at least once during the year. We would know when she left and she would leave written instructions for the classmate that would take her place. We would all help because we at some time would need help. There would be no tattle-tales because everything would go along as planned. Every Monday morning the pupil who was in charge the previous Friday would stand at his or her desk and give his or her report on the previous Friday which probably would include anything that should have been completed but wasn't. The plan worked perfectly the full year.

Earlier that year my father and Mom's oldest brother, Uncle Bill, agreed to lease and operate what had been the bar-room in the large east wing of the Idaho Hotel. It had been closed since November 1911, when Kootenai County went "dry." Their capital was \$500 and that was entirely Uncle Bill's money. Much credit was obtained. The Idaho Cigar Store was in business. At the front was a counter and tobacco in all its many forms was displayed and there was a shoe shine stand against the east wall. Past the swinging doors was a bar that now sold soft drinks, and there were many card tables and pool tables. You would not believe the many hours and the hard work Dad and Uncle Bill put into this venture and by 1917 accounts had been



Interior of The Idaho Bar located on the ground floor of the Idaho Hotel. Percy Walden (Ace's father) leased the space and operated it as a cigar store for the sale of tobacco during prohibition. Left: Ace Walden, Frank Young, Percy Walden, Frank Elgee, Hans Anderson, 2 unknown, Roy Gibbs and Louis Mitchell, 1924. CDA-16-15

paid, progress had been made, and the road seemed bright. Then came World War One--and that's another story.

Once I was a Pool Hall Bum

Just past eight years of age I continued to sell newspapers and when the Idaho Cigar Store was in business I went there when I was through hawking papers for the day and sat in the back of the store. I would wait there until my father was ready to leave for supper and we would walk home together. Coeur d'Alene's Chief of Police met most of the boats and most of the trains as they arrived in town and in the late afternoon he would be tired and sit to rest in the same area where I was. He taught me to play pool. I didn't ever see him shoot a shot on a table but he must have been good at it earlier in life because he did a splendid job of teaching me. I enjoyed the game, had a talent for it, and practiced playing since no one objected because of my age and later when they did PB and I were janitors in the early morning at the store and I arranged to have a half hour to practice before the store was open for business and prior to going to school.

To escape banishment because of my age I played

exhibitions at my father's place against anyone who thought he could beat me. I had a manager and we traveled first class to the Pacific Coast and as far north as Edmonton, Canada. He paid all the bills and he made money because he bet that I would win regardless of who I played and I seldom lost. I learned new gambling games played on the same size or different sizes of tables: live pool, snooker, English billiards, eight ball, nine ball, cribbage, fifty or no count, line-up, professional among others.

I should tell you that in those days if a young man played pool he was characterized as a pool hall bum or a hustler. And I was. In more polite circles you were labeled as showing every evidence of a misspent youth. And I did. Then I got lucky.

Scarlet fever was making the rounds in our town and I got it with complications and took it home to share with the family. When it had run its course the local health physician let us disinfect our home and take the quarantine sign off our front door. Then is when we made a discovery. I was blind. The next few days we had interesting medical visitors who made the decision that they didn't know how long I would be blind but we should plan on it being permanent. It wasn't. Thir-

teen days later I could see but my eyes have been weak ever since. I am no longer a pool hall bum or a hustler. Without exceptionally good vision I would have as much chance beating the bigger guys at pool than a one-legged man would of winning a one-hundred-yard dash against someone who had standard equipment.

World War One for the United States had begun and ended and influenza had come and gone and left many scars and much death. There was little knowledge about how to combat the "flu." In our town we wore masks that almost covered our head and had small holes so eyes could peer out, an opening for nose and no opening for mouth. We should do all our breathing through our nose. No congregating was permitted. On the streets if two people were visiting a third person was prohibited from joining. There are other memories but one shakes me even at this late date. I was delivering papers. I noticed much activity up and down the stairway leading to the Elks Lodge on the second floor of a building on the north side of Sherman Avenue between Third and Fourth Streets. I chose a proper moment and ran upstairs and opened the door to the lodge rooms. It was being used as a receiving station for those who were dead and were awaiting burial. Curiosity is sometimes inspired by the devil. When our schooling reconvened there were several empty seats. Death is not reserved for the elderly.

High School Years

The school bell would ring in a few weeks and after eight years in the newspaper business I would no longer deliver or sell them, I had a prime delivery route that included the business district and ended at Sherman Avenue and Seventh Street. This day I had just put my final paper on a front porch when a freight man from the electric depot found me. He was almost unable to inform me that there had been accident at the depot and my brother Mayo was dead. I took off running as fast as I could for the depot. The stationmaster had a family apartment on the depot's second floor. I was directed up the stairway and entered the apartment. My mother and father were in the room with a doctor and Mayo was face up on the bed and breathing. You cannot imagine the relief I felt. I learned later that Mayo had stopped breathing but Dad had assisted him mouth to mouth and he began to breathe again. It doesn't take much time to have an accident. Mom and Mayo went to the depot on an errand. There was a carryall with high wheels that was pulled to the baggage department of the trains, loaded or unloaded, and returned to its place on wooden planking at the depot. It had a wagon tongue by which it was pulled. When not in use the tongue was kept off the ground by a hook that fit a metal loop on the wagon. Mayo had grabbed hold of the tongue, lifted himself off the ground, swung

the tongue and disengaged it from the loop. The back of his head hit the planking and the metal loop hit his head. Fortunately his hands were between the loop and his face. He suffered no ill effects. In a few weeks his face had lost its scars. I must tell you that of the children Mayo had always been my favorite. He was seven years younger than I. If there was a chance for special success in our family he was the one. My older brother frequently remarked that when the brains were passed out we were skipped and Mayo was given our share. Mayo became a scientist.

When school started PB and I had work to do. At five o'clock each morning we were on our bikes and on the way to the cigar store. We did the janitor work including sweeping, mopping, cleaning cuspidors, brushing pool tables and card tables, dusting here and there. My father arrived at about seven-thirty and we were home for breakfast and then on our way to be at school at eight-forty-five. On alternate weekdays we were at the store from seven in the evening until eight-forty-five after which we headed home in a hurry. We were to be inside the house at nine o'clock.

A boy and his sister were both in my class. They had been absent from school because of some health problem. My teacher knew that they lived close to my path home. She asked me to deliver some books and a note to their home so they could study before returning to class. I agreed to make the delivery. When I knocked at the door of their house their mother answered and I gave her the books and the note and started to leave but she had questions. What was my name? Was I in the same class as her son and daughter? What did my father do? My response to the last one was that my father operated the Idaho Cigar Store. Now she became agitated. Tobacco was a curse sponsored by the devil himself. People who encouraged the use of tobacco were terrible. People who used tobacco she described as "a light at one end and a fool at the other." And then she applied the clincher and closed the door. "Your father leads a dog's life." If her husband had compared my father to a dog I would have clenched my fist and hit him somewhere as hard as I could--and I might have gotten my nose broken for the sixth time before I was graduated from high school. I wasn't much of a fighter and I seldom knew when I should start running. What do you do when a "lady" gets nasty like that? I told no one about the conversation. In the years ahead I was invited several times to that home. I always declined. I didn't ever give a reason for saying "no."

If you have been reading my collection of words you have probably made some judgments about me. You may have concluded that I am thin-skinned, jittery, easily annoyed, have too long a memory, am unable to forget unimportant things, and that in today's parlance I "sweat the small stuff."

Museum News

From the Board President

The Museum of North Idaho started an organizational Museum Assessment Program in February 2014. This program is administered by the American Alliance of Museums and is free. Director Dorothy Dahlgren encouraged this to be done before we head into the complicated process of building a new museum. This assessment was a huge undertaking with extensive self-study concerning every aspect of who we are and what we do. Months later, after our answers had been studied, Holly Beasley Wait came from Georgia to complete our evaluation. She visited with us individually and as a group and asked many more questions. She was most thorough, pleasant and left no stone unturned as she delved into every aspect of our operation.

Our 23-page written report arrived in November and was certainly a complete and meticulous paper. The good news is she had high praise for the newsletter you are reading, the volunteers who are so faithful, Robert Singletary's tours and lectures, plus the quality of the exhibits arranged tastefully in limited space. Best of all, she recognized the hard work and dedication of our Director Dorothy Dahlgren.

There are many suggestions such as updating policies but the big one is to find a way to get a larger, modern exhibit hall and better storage area. Well, Amen to that, but she didn't enclose a magic wand with access to millions of dollars.

The assessment will be a beneficial tool for a long while. What we do know is we are on the right track in many ways as there were no major surprises. We do need to move forward in a thoughtful and methodical manner while keeping focused on our goals.

You can help by being a major do-

nor, or identifying potential donors, serving on the board or a committee and encouraging membership. Please contact Dorothy Dahlgren at 208-664-3448 or dd@museumni.org.

Larry Strobel, Board President

Serve on the Museum Board

The Museum of North Idaho's nominating committee is seeking applicants to fill three-year terms on its nine-member nonprofit Board. As the Museum works towards a new facility the Board's role in connecting with community leaders and potential donors is essential.

Please contact Nominating Committee Chairman Don Pischner at 667-5770, or Robert Singletary at 755-1308 to pick up a packet or visit www.museumni.org for more information. Interviews will take place in early March. Board members are elected by the membership in April.

Help Raise Membership

Building the Museum membership and support base is vital to the future of the Museum. We are asking members to take an active role in helping the Museum increase its visibility in the community by soliciting new members and keeping your membership current. **Please check your mailing label for your dues expiration date.** Including your email helps reduce the cost of renewal notices.

Contribute to the Endowment

Donations can be sent directly to the Idaho Community Foundation, 210 West State Street, Boise, ID 83702 with the check made out to the Museum of North Idaho. They will send you a tax-deduction acknowledgement letter. You can also go online www.idcomfdn.org

or you can send donations noted for the endowment directly to the Museum, PO Box 812, CdA, ID 83816-0812.

Year-end Donations

We thank the following people for their year-end donations that helped us meet our operating budget.

Denny and Kathy Arneson
H.W. Branson
Kevin Boling
CDA Insurance, Rick Maxey
Kim and Liz Cooper
Tom and Savina Darzes
Mike and Kate Dolan
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Helen Tarbert
George and Patti Wilhelm
Patricia Wilson
John and Helen Yuditsky

Museum Field Trips

As school field trip season approaches please consider a donation to pay bus transportation for 4th graders. Thank you Doug and Deidre Chadderdon for your support.

Chapel Bathroom

The Little Red Chapel is a beloved building and to continue to make it a functional part of our community we have to update the bathroom. Last spring the sewer line at the Chapel collapsed. The old bathroom is on a concrete slab in a dirt basement. We explored several options and decided to build a free standing building. Standing on Hubbard Ave. facing the Chapel it will be on the right where the clump of trees are. The 10' x 20' building includes 2 bathrooms and a storage area. It will be handicapped accessible and meet all code requirements.

The estimated \$50,000 project includes the building, digging a sewer line to Hubbard, removal of trees and permit and connection fees.

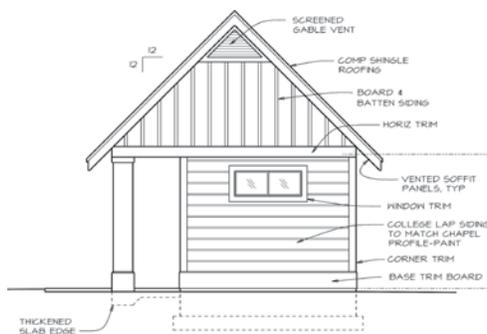
The Chapel is used by an AA group daily, the Anthem Friends Church on Sundays and about 24 weddings and events annually. The income



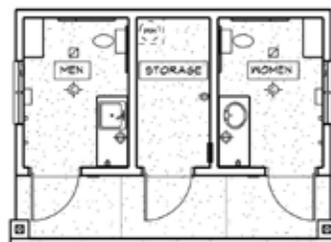
The restroom will be about where the picnic table and the trees with the ribbon are.

supports ongoing cost and maintenance.

Please consider a donation of materials, cash or labor for the bathroom project. Architect Scott Cranston is donating his services to the project. Contact him at 667-7027 or scranston@frontier.com for more information. Send your tax deductible cash donation to the Museum, PO Box 812, CdA, ID 83816-0812.



West elevation, as seen from Hubbard



Floor plan



North elevation, facing the Chapel
Plans by Scott Cranston Architect

Artifact Donations Since November

Sheila Gray: 1907 newspaper map of the Coeur d'Alene Indian Reservation lands.

Ron Evans: Modin Family school booklets from the Bellgrove School.

Judith Stebbins: Ground observer certificates, Cd'A high school and Camp Fire programs from the 1950s.

Gary Frame: paper "The Kid - A Legend in his Own Mind" by Gary Frame.

Volunteers Needed

Webmaster see www.museumni.org

Scanning photos and a basic knowledge of Photoshop

Gift Shop volunteer one day a week or once a month 11 am to 5 pm April 1 to Oct. 31.

Contact Director Dorothy Dahlgren after Feb. 25 at dd@museumni.org or 208-664-3448.

Annual Meeting April 21

The annual meeting and banquet will be held Tuesday April 21 at the Hayden Lake Country Club. Keith Petersen will speak about his book *John Mullan: The Tumultuous Life of a Western Road Builder*. The program will be mailed out in early April with the details.

Museum Reopens April 1

The feature exhibit is on historic buildings and their preservation.

Memorials

- For Dick Smart from Dr. & Mrs. Ken Wright
- For Bjarnes & Anna Svendsgaard from Mae Ann Henderson

All memorial donations go into the Endowment Fund. The endowment is important to the financial health of the Museum and your help in building the endowment will ensure the Museum's future.

To make a memorial donation use the form on the back of the newsletter.

Idaho Wilderness to Statehood - Fourth Thursday of the Month, 7 pm Coeur d'Alene Library

Robert Singletary will present a ten-part lecture series "Idaho Wilderness to Statehood" beginning Thursday February 26 at 7:00 PM in the Coeur d'Alene Public Library's community room. The Museum of North Idaho and the Coeur d'Alene Public Library are sponsoring the series that celebrates Idaho's 125th anniversary as a state. Beginning with the Native American cultures and following the events up to 1890 when Idaho became a state. The programs will be held on the fourth Thursday of each month.



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Amount _____ Whom to notify _____

Send your tax deductible contribution to:
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Museum of North Idaho Mission Statement

The Museum of North Idaho collects, preserves and interprets the history of the Coeur d'Alene Region to foster appreciation of the area's heritage.

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