



An American Tour: 122



Jackson Hole's Million Dollar Cowboy Bar

The Million Dollar Cowboy Bar has a long and colorful history that began in the late 1890's when the first commercial buildings came to Jackson. The site was the location for a Doctors office before being rented to the first bank in Jackson Hole. Later, Joe Ruby erected Ruby's Cafe and Beer Garden at the site.

In 1937, Mr. Ben Goe purchased the bar and changed the name to the Cowboy Bar. It was Ben Goe's good fortune that won the bar the first liquor license in the State of Wyoming following the repeal of prohibition. The bar was remodeled to include the knobbed pine which graces the bar to this day. Mr. Goe spent one whole winter cleaning and scraping the pine before it was used for construction. Since the knobbed pine was so well liked by the customers, Ben spent another 14 months transporting more of the wood, for chairs, pillars, walls and ceiling trim. At this time they also built a long fancy bar with silver dollars inlaid in the top.

In the mid-1940's, the Cowboy Bar was sold to Preston Parkinson, who is responsible for the present "Million Dollar Cowboy Bar" name. Mr. Parkinson expanded the bar, again using knobbed pine to create distinctive handles, railings and other interior and exterior decorations. In 1953, a gas explosion from the basement caused extensive damage to the bar. Many of the huge pine pillars crumbled, chairs were broken, and nearly all the elaborately decorated basement was destroyed. Mr. Parkinson, a casualty of the explosion, vowed from his hospital bed that he would restore the bar to its original condition. He also added the huge neon sign that still marks the front of the bar on the town square.

In 1973 Ron Schultz, Bud Jensen, and Cliff Poindexter bought the bar and installed the saddle bar stools and a London-made red carpet that bore the symbol and name of the Cowboy Bar. Since 1988, The Million Dollar Cowboy Bar has been owned by Art & Carol Andersen. The Million Dollar Cowboy Bar has the best live western music in the Tetons and it remains the number one bar in Jackson Hole. It is a vital part of western Americana, and, is renowned throughout the world.

