



33 ALEX JOHNSON HOTEL, RAPID CITY, S. D.

119168

WALK INTO HISTORY *the tour*

More than ninety years after Alex Johnson's dream was realized, his grand hotel - the Hotel Alex Johnson - is moving forward with confidence into another sixty years. A tribute to a man and his beloved Dakota land.



523 SIXTH STREET | RAPID CITY, SD 57701
ALEXJOHNSON.COM



A BRIEF HISTORY

ALEX CARLTON JOHNSON (1861-1938), vice president of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad, was founder of this grand hotel that bears his name. An admirer of Native Americans, he spoke of “a shrine and tribute of the Sioux Indian Nation”. The structural design is a successful blend of two spirits: the heritage of the Plain Indians and the Germanic Tudor architecture representing German immigration to the Dakotas.

In 1927, construction began on the hotel the day before work began on Mount Rushmore. Less than a year later, on July 1, 1928, the first guest registered to begin a long, successive line of presidents, celebrities and happy guests at the Hotel Alex Johnson. This walking tour will take you over the same paths that thousands have taken through the years. As you learn more about its rich past, you will begin to understand why the Hotel Alex Johnson is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.





1. 6TH STREET & FACADE

Your tour begins at the corner of Sixth Street and St. Joe. This was where the crowd gathered in August, 1927, to watch as the steam shovel took the first bite of earth which began building the Hotel Alex Johnson - one day before the first blast at Mount Rushmore.

2. SCULPTED INDIAN HEADS

Walking north toward the hotel entrance, stop midway and look up to view the SCULPTED INDIAN HEADS. These were taken from the design of Indian head nickels and pennies.

3. ALEX JOHNSON TEPEE SYMBOL

As you approach the lobby entrance, notice the Alex Johnson "AJ" tepee symbol embedded in the entry walkway. The two lions' heads on either side of the front door are also worth noting.

4. PADDY O'NEILL'S IRISH PUB & GRILL

Immediately upon entering the Hotel Alex Johnson, on your right is Paddy O'Neill's Irish Pub and Grill, originally a dining room called the Indian Grill. Paddy's opened its doors on December 26, 1986. It was named after our first registered guest who arrived on July 1, 1928, on the early train from Los Angeles to visit relatives in Rapid City. Notice the large hand-carved mahogany bar. The lion's head gargoyle on the bar is a duplicate of the two lions' heads seen on either side of the hotel entrance.



5. THE HOTEL LOBBY

Notice the “Sacred Four Directions” in the LOBBY TILES. The Lakota Sioux people believe their four sacred powers are derived from the four directions. The north (white) is a symbol for the “Cleansing Snow”. The east (red) is the home of the “Morning Star”, which gives us “Daybreak Knowledge”. The south (yellow) is the home of “Warm Winds”, which replenishes the growth of the land. The “Thunder Being”, at home in the west (black) gives strength and power in time of trouble. Among the signs is a symbol resembling the swastika, long used by Native Americans since prehistoric times.

6. LOBBY CHANDELIER

Look upward to our unique CHANDELIER of wood, copper and glazed tile. Suspended with chains, the chandelier is formed of war lances. The fixture is “teepee” shaped and made of concentric, decreasing-size, copper clad wooden rings. These rings are decorated in authentic Sioux patterns. Electrified copper torches topped with brown glass flames are inserted through the rings to provide the primary light source for the lobby.

7. LOBBY CEILING

The LOBBY CEILING directly above continues the stenciled, authentic Sioux designs between the open beams, using bright colors. These patterns are of the traditional “box and border” design. Eight plaster-cast busts of Indian men hold the beams crossing the high ceiling.

8. ORIGINAL HARDWOOD KEYBOX

Behind the front desk, the original hardwood keybox is still intact.



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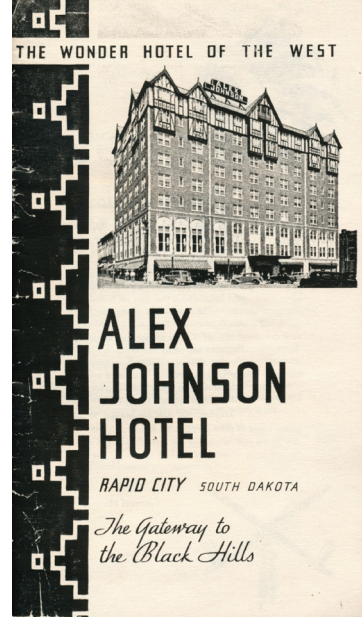
Alex Johnson Hotel

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9. THE FIREPLACE

Another feature of the lobby is the striking portrait of Alex Johnson in Sioux attire over the massive fireplace. A long time admirer of the Sioux, he was made an honorary blood brother of Chief Iron Horse in 1933, receiving the name “Chief Red Star”. The fireplace, made of Black Hills stone, is one of three similarly designed in the world. The mantle is decorated with the brands of local ranchers. The huge rock chosen for the keystone was carefully selected for its resemblance to a buffalo head.

10. ALEX JOHNSON’S PORTRAIT

Above and to the right of the fireplace is a PORTRAIT of Alex Johnson. This portrait was commissioned and presented to Alex Johnson from the 580 members of the Chicago Rotary Club in appreciation of his service as president of that organization in 1924 and 1925.

11. BISON HEADS

Adding balance are the two BISON HEADS mounted over the southwest entrance of the AJ’s Mercantile. The American buffalo is not a buffalo at all, but one of two species of bison. “Boeuf” was the name the French explorers used for the great humped animal. The word was later corrupted to “buffalo” by English Settlers.

12. CHUBBY CHIPMUNK CHOCOLATES

Lucky to have Chip in our Starbucks, Chubby Chipmunk’s kitchen originally resides in Deadwood, SD. These truffles are hand made in small batches to ensure quality and freshness. Each truffle and candy is an original creation and will satisfy anyone’s sweet tooth.

13. STARBUCKS COFFEE

Originally the location of the Landmark Restaurant, Starbucks Coffee offers guests a warm and welcoming neighborhood atmosphere with expansive seating and fireplace. As the largest Starbucks in Rapid City, our friendly coffee shop is well-suited to serve hotel guests as well as the general public.

14. MEZZANINE | SECOND FLOOR

Wood craftsmen carefully cut and stained the mezzanine bannister, copying the original. Carved railings around the balcony and the floor patterns complete the original effect. From this height, the ceiling, Indian busts and the chandelier can be seen in more detail.

15. THE BALLROOM

This space has been a ballroom, nightclub, and is presently used for banquets, dances and entertainment. Max Rheiner, an obscure artist from Chicago, painted the original four murals seen on the north wall. The murals realistically depict four well-known areas of the region. From left to right, they are Black Elk Peak, the Needles, the Badlands, and Spearfish Canyon. The chandeliers are patterned from old kerosene lamps.

16. THE LINCOLN ROOM

The Lincoln Room was the location of the original restaurant, now restored to its original elegance. The ceiling lights are originals. The wallpaper is custom, hand printed paper and the same design used in Abraham Lincoln's home in Springfield, Illinois. An original 19th century Lincoln print adorns the wall. It may be noted that the AJ meeting rooms are named after each of the four presidents who are represented on Mount Rushmore.

17. VERTEX SKY BAR

When the hotel was first built, there was a solarium on the 10th floor with an observation tower, later used by KOTA Radio station. Today, the 10th floor is an upscale rooftop Vertex Sky Bar for club members and hotel guests. Some people are lucky enough to be able to leave work at five o'clock and catch the glorious window of time known as happy hour. For Vertex members and guests, however, every hour at the rooftop bar is happy. Equal parts cool and comfortable, Vertex blends modern bar features with traditional architecture, resulting in a truly one-of-a-kind venue.



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