

Historic Hotel Elliott by Jaime Lump  
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The Hotel Elliott family story begins in 1885 when Jeremiah (Jerry) Elliott married Margaret Brown in New Castle, Pennsylvania. Their first child, Flora, was born the next year, then their son, John, came along 6 years later.

Meanwhile, a young man by the name of Clarence E. Short was growing up just 100 miles south of New Castle in the tiny town of Dawson, Pennsylvania.

Some years later, Clarence and Flora, married in Greeley, Colorado and the families eventually made their way to Oregon. For a

while, Clarence managed a J.C. Penney in La Grande as Flora raised their son, Harold (Hal), while father and son, Jerry and John Elliott, ran the Angela Hotel in Portland, but opportunity brought them all back together in Astoria.

During the post-fire rebuild of Astoria, construction on a new hotel at 12 th and Duane began on May 1 st , 1924 under the ownership of Charles Niemi.

Original plans for the building were drawn up with four floors and 51 rooms, though two weeks later, an additional fifth floor would be added to the plans increasing the room count to 68. That same day, the Elliotts signed a lease to operate the hotel and its namesake became official: Hotel Elliott, sometimes also referred to as The Elliott Hotel.



For decades, Hotel Elliott operated as

more of a working-class hotel, yet without depriving guests the sophistication and grace of a luxury hotel. Advertising itself as 'A Modern Hotel in a Modern City' with, of course, its "wonderful beds," the concrete building stationed its lobby on the first floor where it remains to this day, with automatic elevators to take guests up to their desired floors. Though each floor did have shared baths, the guests' rooms were equipped with large closets and shoe shine brushes; furniture throughout the hotel was of dark wood, upholstered with the finest of leathers; and a large phonograph entertained guests in a lounge on the second floor. In 1928, Flora Short opened the Hotel Elliott Coffee Shop where the hotel's wine bar is now located. Curiously, over the span of 14 years, the Hotel Elliott Coffee Shop changed ownership at least 7 times. During his time as owner, Ernie Anderson had died suddenly at the age of 47. Another owner, Benny Dixon, forced the restaurant to close its doors for several months after his mysterious

disappearance. The Hotel Elliott Coffee Shop officially closed in 1942. That same year, the property was officially purchased by John Elliott, Clarence Short, and John's mother, Margaret. (Jerry, who suffered from heart disease, had reportedly 'dropped dead' in a fixit shop on Exchange Street 13 years prior.)

To acquire the hotel, the family entered a sort of bidding war with John Osburn and Marshall Leathers, owners of Gearhart Hotel and Hotel Astoria, who, dissatisfied with the outcome of the bidding, raised an apparent stink over the Elliott family not paying the hotel's back taxes on time – perhaps a last-ditch effort for Osburn and Leathers to acquire the property. Nevertheless, the sale of the hotel was finalized and Hotel Elliott remained in its lessee's hands as the new owners.

A short time after the sale, Margaret Elliot suffered from multiple strokes, leaving her bed-ridden for 7 years. She was comatose when she eventually passed away in her room in 1950. For about 50 years, the Elliotts and the Shorts all called Hotel Elliott home. The families slept in bedrooms on the top floor, while living and cooking spaces were in the basement. In that time, both John Elliott and Clarence Short worked long days - the 1940 census shows Short clocking in 99 hours a week. Yet, somehow, in his spare time, Short was president of the Kiwanis and Astoria Chamber of Commerce. For multiple terms, he sat on the Astoria School Board. Elliott, who had served in the U.S. Army during World War I, was a member of the V.F.W. and Clatsop Post 12 American Legion. In between these activities, he helped raise a daughter, Margaret Nadine, in the hotel with his wife, Ruby.

Hotel Elliott was also home to several Columbia River Pilots. According to the Clatsop County Historical Society archivist, Liisa Penner, "The river pilots used to stay there because it was centrally located downtown where the restaurants were and only 2 ½ blocks to the pilots' office. The bar pilots had their homes in Astoria, but the river pilots usually lived in Portland. They needed a place here in town to spend the night waiting of the next ship to pilot to Portland." In 1969, Clarence Short died from a heart attack. More than 1,000 condolence calls and notes flooded the hotel. His wife, Flora, suffered multiple heart attacks, one which, too, took her life the following year. John Elliott retired from the hotel in 1973 when he was 81 years old.

Ownership of Hotel Elliott has changed hands a few times since then and twenty years ago, it went through a full renovation as part of a larger vision of revitalizing downtown Astoria. The project reflected the hotel's original intent of luxury, but hasn't lost its roots. Above the fireplace

you will find a 1920s photo of Jeremiah and Margaret Elliott standing by the original lobby desk, still used today, ready to check you in and welcome you to the timeless, historic, Hotel Elliott.

