

Acknowledgements

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and

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For more information on the Twin Falls area and local lodging, call 1-866-TWINFALLS or visit www.twinfallschamber.com



For additional information on Idaho, call 1-800-VISIT-ID.



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Twin Falls, Idaho

Downtown Historic District



Twin Falls Canal Company Building, 1909

A Walking Tour

Twin Falls City
Historic Preservation Commission
and
Twin Falls Area
Chamber of Commerce

Twin Falls Downtown Historic District

Imagine a desolate landscape – no trees, just sagebrush, jackrabbits, and roads eight inches deep in dust. When Twin Falls was just wide-open range lands of sagebrush, I.B. Perrine saw bigger things in store for this area.

Between its founding in 1904 and the present day, Twin Falls has expanded to become a hub for business, entertainment, and living for 60,000 people. One of Idaho's fastest growing cities, it is expected to continue to boom for many years to come. I.B. Perrine would be proud to see what his little Twin Falls has become over the past 100+ years.

Brief History of the City of Twin Falls

Interest in irrigating the area around the present city of Twin Falls began to develop in the 1880s. I.B. Perrine settled at the Blue Lakes Ranch in the Snake River Gorge and dreamed of creating lush farms above the canyon. The Carey Act of 1894 provided a viable method for establishing irrigated farm land. Perrine was a key player in the Twin Falls Land and Water Company when it was incorporated in October, 1890, with plans to irrigate the area. After a major infusion of capital from Frank H. Buhl in January 1903, the Twin Falls Land and Water Company signed a contract with the State Land Board to provide the massive irrigation system to the area.

Twin Falls Land and Water Company decided to build the City of Twin Falls because potential customers needed a town to guarantee the permanence of the irrigation project. In September 1903, company engineer John E. Hayes selected the present site, partly

Main Avenue South and West Side

Bill's Automotive

402 Main Avenue South

In 1904, the first Twin Falls structures included I.B. Perrine's temporary wooden shack for his Twin Falls Investment Company, which sold town site lots and homestead land. Behind this shack, George Sprague and Tom Robertson set up a tent for their Irrigated Lands Company, which sold insurance on commercial and residential properties. This company remained in the Robertson family until 1973.

Obenchain Insurance Company

264 Main Avenue South

"The oldest business in Twin Falls" is now more than 100 years old. Tom Robertson's Irrigated Lands Insurance Co. was continued by his son John B. Robertson and John Whitsell from the 1930s until 1962 when Whitsell passed away. In 1963, Dan Obenchain joined the company, which became Robertson-Obenchain Insurance. Following the death of John Robertson

because it was the 16th Section, which in all townships was to be sold to finance public schools. In mid-March 1904, key company leaders purchased land from the state and an initial plat was made in May.



Main Avenue 1910

On the same day in mid-June 1904, the Twin Falls Townsite Company was formed in Salt Lake City, Utah, to market the town and the Twin Falls Investment Company was formed in Boise, Idaho, to market the land. The townsite and farmland would either "boom" or "bust" together. The Perrine and Burton, a general store, was the first building completed on July 23;

the Twin Falls Investment Company office followed on July 26, and the first lot was sold on August 1, 1904. Twin Falls village was incorporated less than a year later in mid-April 1905.

During the post World War I years, and through the Great Depression of the 1930s, building in Twin Falls slowed to a crawl. After 1924, Idaho's economy, like that of surrounding states, slumped because of the depressed agricultural prices. Economic conditions worsened after the stock market crash in 1929 and remained depressed through the 1930s. The only substantial building constructed during the era prior to World War II was the Radio Rondevo, headquarters of the local radio station KTFI.

We begin our tour at the east end of Main Avenue at the corner of Jerome Street.

in 1971, Dan continued the business as Obenchain Insurance.

Brown's Furniture

202 Main Avenue South

The fourth generation of Brown family members celebrates nearly 90 years of family business. In 1919, Claude Brown opened his music company at 143 Main Avenue East. Appliances, furniture, and draperies were added. After service in World War II, Claude Jr.'s sons Karl, Doug, and Mark expanded the furniture department and dropped the appliances. In 1990, they purchased the former J.C. Penney Building and discontinued the music line. The fountain located to the west of the Brown Furniture building, the Hansen Street Park, and Main Avenue's reconfiguration was all the result of Urban Renewal in the 1970s.

Idaho Youth Ranch

162 Main Avenue South

Built in 1905, this was the Idaho Department Store (or "I.D." for short).

Its brick façade was hidden in the Urban Renewal project. O.H. and Harry Allen, from Boise, built it as Allen Mercantile, but the name was soon changed. The top floor was occupied by the Knights of Pythias and would serve as the county courthouse from 1907 to 1910 when the present Twin Falls County Courthouse on Shoshone Street near City Park was built.

Clos Office Supply
150 Main Avenue South

A second generation of the Purves family is celebrating more than 95 years of business in Twin Falls. In 1912, Larry Clos opened the first permanent book and stationery store on Main Avenue West, next to Sav-Mor Drug. He dispensed school textbooks provided by the state. In 1959, Clos' partner Ed Purves became sole owner. When schools started selling their own books, the Clos store became office-oriented and was moved to its present location and became Clos Office Supply.



Crowley's
144 Main Avenue South

For over 65 years, the Crowley building has been a Twin Falls landmark. In 1941, S. Leslie Crowley from Salt Lake City purchased Trolinger's Pharmacy and soda fountain in the three-story Booth Building. In 1961, son Robert changed the name to Crowley's Pharmacy. With the urban renewal project of the 1970's, the top floor of the building was removed by backhoe, and the façade and interior were updated. In 1998, Robert's son Richard restored the original wooden floor and tin ceiling, and sold the pharmacy to feature the original soda fountain with hot lunches.

Wells Fargo Bank (with 1917 clock)
102 Main Avenue South

Site of the first 1904 retail business in Twin Falls, the Perrine and Burton Store was owned by two of I.B. Perrine's brothers, Silas and William, and their cousin, William L. Burton. In 1908, Twin Falls Bank and Trust purchased the property and erected its existing building that was completed in 1910.



Under the leadership of Harry Eaton and Curtis Turner, it was the only bank in Twin Falls to survive the Crash of 1929. This building is on the National Register of Historic Buildings.

Magic Valley Bank
113 Main Avenue West

Site of the 1905 Perrine Hotel. I.B. Perrine's investment company contracted with the Twin Falls Town Site Company to build a promotional, 50-bed, luxury hotel. At the rear of the hotel was an Edison electric generator that lit up the hotel and four village blocks in three directions from dawn to dusk until 1907 when the power plant at Shoshone Falls went on line. The hotel was owned by George Sprague who named it for Perrine, and was owned later by his partner and brother-in-law, Tom Robertson. Tom's son Richard managed the hotel

for 30 years while son John B. Robertson became proprietor of Irrigated Lands Company. Ownership of the hotel remained in the Robertson family until 1973 when it was sold and razed to construct the Bank of Idaho, becoming Magic Valley Bank in 2003.

Sav-Mor Drug Store
139 Main Avenue West

"The oldest family-owned drug store in town" boasts nearly 70 years in business. In 1938, the Sav-Mor Drug Store Chain opened its store in this 1909 Gilbert Building, and in 1950, Al Nelson became a partner. With son David Nelson, the drug store became a family business and continues to serve Twin Falls today.

Rudy's, A Cook's Paradise
147 Main Avenue West

"The oldest continuous retail business" in Twin Falls dates from the city's origin. In 1904, Roy Gager set up a hardware store behind the Perrine and Burton Store, then moved it to Main Avenue and named it Twin Falls Hardware. Purchased by Coe M. Price in 1935, it became Price Hardware. In 1947, it was purchased by Rudy Ashenbrenner and then in 1991 by his son Tom who dropped the hardware line to create Rudy's, a cooking store and more. In restoring the façade of this building, Tom discovered that it was built in 1904.



Tidepool
155 Main Avenue West

This 1904 site first housed *The Twin Falls News*, a weekly paper published by Charles Diehl and O.H. Barber from Salt Lake City. The first issue was published on October 28, 1904, when the town was not yet one year old.

Twin Falls Canal Company Building
163 2nd Avenue West

Although this historic building does not sit on Main Avenue, a tour of downtown would not be complete without a look at one of the earliest buildings in the city. Turning left (or south) from Main Avenue, walk one block and cross the street to see the Canal Company building, built in 1909. This one-story brick structure has undergone few exterior alterations. The Twin Falls Canal Company was the successor and locally-owned entity of the Twin Falls Land and Water Company, the organization formed in 1900 that provided the financial backing and leadership for the canal system that opened the Twin Falls tract. The building (now owned by a local attorney) served as the Canal Company's headquarters until it relocated in 1993. (Shown on cover of brochure.)

Public School Administration Building
201 Main Avenue West

Built in 1917, this building originally served as the neo-classical home of the United States Post Office. In 1961, the Post Office moved to its present location on 2nd Avenue West and the Twin Falls School District Administration has occupied this building since.



Radio Rondevo
241 Main Avenue West

In 1940, Florence Gardener had Radio Rondevo built with a ballroom dance floor and stage on the main floor and a large radio studio upstairs. On Saturday nights during World War II, "Live from the KTFI Ballroom" featured big name bands like Tommy Dorsey, Glenn Miller, and Lawrence Welk. In 2002, the Radio Rondevo was purchased and restored by two local businessmen.

Main Avenue North and East Side

Across the street from Radio Rondevo, our tour continues...

Snyder's Office Equipment (closed)
218 Main Avenue North

This 1905 site housed *The Twin Falls Times* (later known as *The Idaho Evening Times*), started by Wilbur S. Hill. In 1913, Roy Reed purchased *The Twin Falls News* and renamed it *The Twin Falls Morning News*, a daily paper. Roland Tofflemire and Emil Bordewick purchased Hill's *Times*, and in 1937 bought out Reed's *News* and combined the two in 1942 to print one afternoon daily paper, *The Times-News*.

Cain's (closed)
202 Main Avenue North

In 1909, Consolidated Wagon & Machine Co. moved to this location from Second Avenue South. With 32 stoves, workers built fires when heat was needed. After World War II, Detweiler Brothers, a heating, refrigeration and plumbing business with 17 war-time government contracts, made their home here and remodeled. In 1963, Elvis Cain moved in and expanded his appliance business to a full service home furnishing store.

Janitzio Mexican Restaurant (with new façade)
164 Main Avenue North

In 1908, the Twin Falls Light & Power building provided office space for light and water companies as well as I.B. Perrine's Twin Falls Investment Company. In 1916, the Idaho Power Company was incorporated and had its headquarters here for 50 years before moving to its present location on Second Ave. North and Fairfield St. The Boy Scouts of America also resided here for a number of years.

Scrappers and Stampers
156 Main Avenue North

Look up and you'll see "Koto Building 1920." Expansion in 1920 of the Twin Falls Bank and Trust along Main Avenue South took out the building that had housed Tom Koto's Café since 1908, so Tom rebuilt here. The Depression closed Tom's restaurant in 1930. However, post World War II, Tom's sons Ernest and Tom Jr. reopened Koto's at 147 Shoshone St. North, serving Twin Falls residents for another 23 years.

The Orpheum Theater
146 Main Avenue North

In 1910, the first Orpheum Theater was built on Shoshone St. North. The present structure was built in 1921 by the Twin Falls Amusement Company, incorporated in 1920. An eight-piece orchestra played for major movies until replaced by the "talkies" in 1929. Famous march king John Philip Sousa performed with his orchestra at the Orpheum in 1924. He also worked with the local high school band during the afternoon of their evening performance, creating life-long



memories for many of the students.

The Paris Building
124 Main Avenue North

Earl Faulkner owned The Paris from 1952 to 1990. Women came from miles around to find just the right outfit at The Paris. Faulkner was a tireless fundraiser for the College of Southern Idaho, and was largely responsible for the planetarium named in his honor. He died in 2001 at the age of 89, leaving his estate to CSI. The building currently houses a variety of businesses.

Dunken's
102 Main Avenue North

This corner lot was vacant until 1916 when a pharmacist from Shoshone built his Baugh Building. He affiliated with Walgreen's Drug Store and included a soda fountain. In 1954, the corner building became Leonard Emerson's City Drug which he ran for 30 years. In 1990, it became Dunken's Draught House.



Key Bank
103 Main Avenue East

With a 1960s façade, this is I.B. Perrine's 1906 First National Bank Building. In 1904, Perrine organized his bank to finance the promotional luxury Perrine Hotel. Next to his investment company's original shack, Perrine first built a temporary wooden bank for general banking while his permanent one was under construction. His bank failed in 1931, became the Fidelity National Bank in 1935, and is now Key Bank.

D'on's Restaurant (closed)
117 Main Avenue East

The Harder Building with "1906" on the façade was built by German-born Harder F. Harder. Harder had opened a bakery on Second Avenue East in 1905 but moved into his new building the next year. In 1907, when it became Bainbridge Grocery, the volunteer-run Idaho Free Traveling Library found its first home on the second floor over the store.

Rogerson Mall
161 Main Avenue East

Built in 1908, the three-story luxury Rogerson Hotel had 85 guest-rooms, some with private baths. The owners were pioneer sheep men Andrew Rogerson and John MacRae, both Scotsmen. The Hoops family purchased the hotel in 1933. From 1946 to 1976, Ted Smith and Ben Mottern ran a very successful restaurant, catering service and lounge on the main floor of the building. During the 1970s Urban Renewal, it became the Rogerson Mall with a new exterior and the addition of a motel in the rear. When Glenn and Judy Schroeder purchased the building in 1999, they tore down the motel and built a new addition with a mini-park.