When Black entrepreneur W.D. Allen launched the Golden West Hotel in 1906, Portland was booming. The completion of the transcontinental railroad, the opening of Union Station and the Lewis and Clark Centennial Fair triggered a flood of visitors and workers to the city’s bustling North End. The Golden West was designed to serve the Black railway porters, cooks, barbers and waiters recruited by the major railroads. It provided “all the conveniences of home” for Black workers denied accommodation in Portland’s white owned hotels, and was a center of African American social life until the hotel’s closure in 1931.

Patrons could get a haircut and a shave at Waldo Bogle’s Barbershop, sweets at A.G. Green’s ice cream parlor and candy shop, and relax in George Moore’s Golden West Athletic Club featuring a Turkish bath and gymnasium. In its heyday, the Golden West provided an overnight home for prominent black entertainers, athletes, and civic leaders such as Illinois Congressman Oscar DePriest and labor organizer A. Philip Randolph. Some even “retired” there, including Portland Advocate newspaper founder and famous Portland Hotel “hat check man,” E.D. Cannady.

“My grandfather saw there was this Black community that mainly worked for the railroad and there was no place for the Blacks to stay.... In 1905 he purchased a building and in 1906 opened up the Golden West which was the largest Black-owned hotel west of the Mississippi.”

Anthony Allen

The Golden West Hotel Barbershop (1913-1931) was owned by Waldo Bogle, son of Robert Arthur Bogle, a prominent businessman, scholar and Baptist from Walla Walla, fellow-classmate of Kathleen Hall Bogle, a prominent journalist and club activist, and granddaughter of Robert Arthur Bogle, a former Portland police detective and long-time member of the NAACP and PPA. The family has a century-long involvement with the civic and artistic life of the African American community and the city of Portland.

Kathryn Hall Bogle

“I can remember that my father would sometimes try to find a place for us in a white hotel and invariably we would be turned away.”

E. Shelton Hill

The Golden West Hotel closed in 1931, a victim of the national economic Depression. The “New Golden West Hotel” opened in 1933 but closed in 1935. Other closures plagued the hotel until 1943, when it reopened as the Broadmoor Hotel, surviving until 1984 as low cost housing. Through the efforts of the building’s present owner, Central City Concern, and with the assistance of the Portland Development Commission, the building has been rehabilitated and the name restored to recognize the Golden West Hotel’s significant role in the history of Portland.