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JOURNAL PHOTO / DANIEL GEARINO

The refurbished Amway Grand Hotel, viewed from the end of the Monroe Street Mall

Soap, God credited in a downtown rescue

□ **EDITOR'S NOTE:** With the opening of Flint's Hyatt Regency Hotel less than two months away, a Journal reporter traveled to Grand Rapids for the opening of a similar — and to Flint, a competitive — convention hotel, the Amway Grand Plaza. Related story G1.

By DANIEL GEARINO
Journal staff writer

GRAND RAPIDS — Pity this poor city. Here it sits in the west of the state, away from major league sports, away from Detroit's big-city culture, away from all the appurtenances of auto-industrial life.

Here it sits, governed by a bevy of Dutch burghers whose primary business

old matron that has gotten a new trousseau after a \$20-million facelift.

THE AMWAY GRAND is the finishing piece in Grand Rapids' effort to become Michigan's No. 2 convention city, behind Detroit. Adjacent to the hotel is the city's civic and cultural complex, the Grand Center. Across the river from the hotel is the new Ford Presidential Museum. Behind the hotel, a 28-story, 300-room addition is being built.

It makes a nice package. In fact, if the business of building convention hotels was a horse race, Flint just got beat out of the gate.

"I personally think (Amway) saved downtown," said a leading Grand Rapids businessman of the Amway hotel investment. It is an opinion shared by many of that city's political and business leaders — Amway has become to Grand Rapids what the Mott Foundation has been to Flint.

A teach then fou

By CHRIS CHRISTO
Journal staff writer

Gym teacher Patti Wiles learned from doctors that she probably suffered a toxic reaction. Tests ordered by the state health department showed that chlorine had leaked from a storage room under the school and filtered into other parts of the building. Wiles' office was near the leak. Engineering inspectors are studying air circulation in the building.

She broke out in urticaria. Her speech became slurred and she would blur and she would drop out of her classes. Finally, in December, her glands swelled so much she had to be hospitalized. She was diagnosed with a cancer test.

"He told me I might have a 'disease,'" said the 26-year-old and gymnastics coach. "I was wrong with me. I've never been a very healthy person. I thought I was going to kill me."

THE MYSTERY of Wiles' illness was learned from doctors that she probably suffered a toxic reaction. Tests ordered by the state health department showed that chlorine had leaked from a storage room under the school and filtered into other parts of the building.

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Reag from

From Washington reports

WASHINGTON — President Reagan decided to trim his planned increase in defense spending of the next three fiscal years to \$13 billion, a figure considerably short of the Office of Management and Budget Director David A. Stockman recommended and means new, larger domestic programs.

Last month, press chief of staff James A. Baker III said the president had "prepared" to cut defense spending for 1983 and 1984 by \$30 billion, and White House spokesmen have said those figures on a number of occasions since.

But Saturday, White House

Defens paying failu

A VINTAGE of DISTINCTION

Five Generations of

LEDYARD DESCENDANTS



MRS. GEORGE A. WHINERY
MRS. QUEEN L. WONDERLY

MRS. C. L. LOCKWOOD, JR.
MISS KATHERINE PANTLIND WHINERY

Photo by Maurice Carnes La Claire
MRS. J. BOYD PANTLIND

WILLIAM B. LEDYARD was one of the early settlers of Grand Rapids coming here in 1858 and immediately becoming interested in the affairs of the growing community. He established a private bank in 1861 and in 1865 assisted in the organization of the City National Bank, forerunner of what is today the National Bank of Grand Rapids. He was associated with this institution until his death in 1890.

The group which is shown here represents five generations, all direct descendants of Mr. Ledyard. They are:

Queen L. (Mrs. Joseph H.) Wonderly, daughter of Mr. Ledyard.

Jessie A. (Mrs. J. Boyd) Pantlind, his granddaughter, a daughter of Mrs. Moses V. Aldrich who was Mr. Ledyard's daughter.

Katherine Pantlind (Mrs. C. L.) Lockwood, Jr., daughter of Mrs. Pantlind and great granddaughter of Mr. Ledyard.

Katherine Pantlind (Mrs. George A.) Whinery, daughter of the late Fred Z. Pantlind, granddaughter of Mrs. J. B. Pantlind and great-great granddaughter of Mr. Ledyard, and little Katherine Pantlind Whinery, daughter of Mrs. Whinery, great granddaughter of Mrs. Pantlind and great-great-great granddaughter of Mr. Ledyard.



← Pantlind Hotel

Before the advent of the automobile and suburb living, the central business district of a city the size of Grand Rapids was the hub of many activities. These included government, entertainment, commerce, banking, and professional services. Essential to a thriving downtown was a healthy hotel business. By 1890 there were more than forty hotels that could accommodate over three thousand people. In those days before mass communication and speedy transportation, it was often necessary for commercial and other visitors to stay in Grand Rapids more than one day to complete their business.

By no means the first hotel, but certainly the most enduring, was the Sweet (Pantlind) Hotel. In 1868 Martin L. Sweet built his hotel on the northwest corner of Monroe and Pearl. It was purchased by J. Boyd Pantlind in 1902, who quickly turned it into the leading hotel in town. A "new", completely rebuilt, Pantlind was finished in 1924. With 750 rooms it became the host of many conventions, including a 1920's Grand Army of the Republic gathering. With the completion of the Civic Auditorium across the street, the Pantlind has continued to thrive as a regional convention center. The photographs on this page, from top to bottom were taken in 1910, mid-1920's and 1930.



The physical structure of the city is a constantly changing mosaic which has a profound influence on our work and on our leisure-time activities. The decisions of government officials, businessmen, and social leaders are the driving force which sustains the continual modification of the urban structures. The result is a pattern of continuity and change that compels a city to keep recreating itself in a new image to meet the needs of each succeeding generation of citizens. The central business district, for example, is a mixture of decline and hopeful signs of a new revitalization.

Despite the fact that downtown Grand Rapids is no longer a center for hotels, due to the automobile and decentralization, the Pantlind Hotel carries on in its proud tradition. Increasingly dependent on the convention trade, this single remaining full-service hotel continues to be successful. In the photograph above, conventioners of the Order of the Eastern Star gather in the lobby of the Pantlind. For those who wish to return to the past during a lunch hour or for an evening, the Pantlind offers the Back Room Saloon (below left). Its decor reminds one of an 1890's drinking establishment. The Pantlind also hosts many banquets each year in its Grand Ballroom and other halls. In the photograph at right below, Richard VanderVeen, Congressman from Michigan's 5th District, attends a political fund-raising dinner.

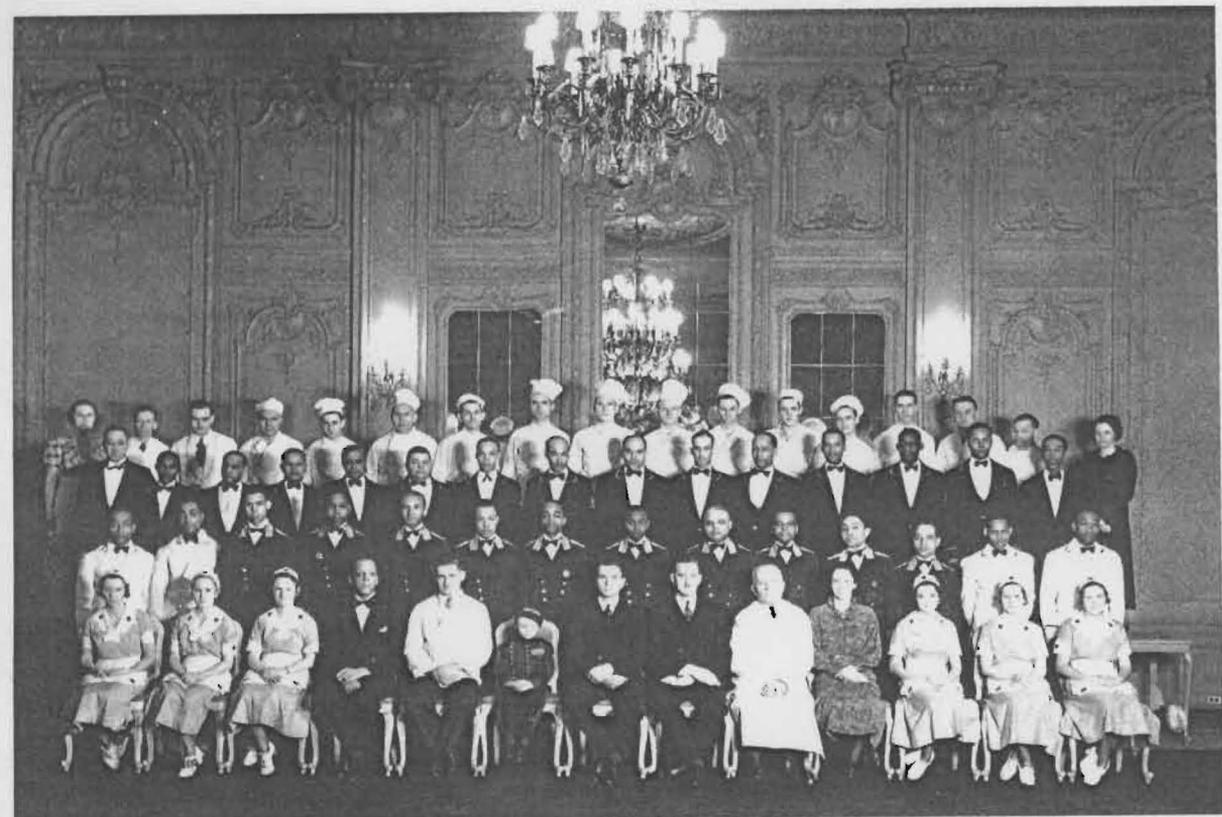




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Pantlind Staff

Hotels and restaurants employed a diversified work force. Substantial numbers of black workers found employment in downtown restaurants and hotels, as is apparent in the picture above of the Pantlind Hotel staff in the 1940's.

Both male and female workers found the newly developed opportunities in white-collar work to their liking. The 1920's photograph below of a secretarial school illustrates this increasingly viable alternative to traditional factory work. Many chose this type of training and employment as Grand Rapids emerged as a regional center in the economy of western Michigan.



Proud hotel's history relived

The history of the Pantlind Hotel has been written and rewritten. But it's the future that's most intriguing now — a future of beauty and class promised by new owners.

Amway Corp. bought the Pantlind two years ago to create a first-class hotel complex that, combined with the new civic center, would transform that part of downtown into a major convention center, similar to Detroit's Renaissance Center.

Presently, the old Pantlind is undergoing a restoration slated to return the "grand old lady" to its post-World War I elegance.

In addition, Amway has plans to build a 28-story hotel along the river. The hotel, which will be about twice the height of McKay Tower, will have a wall of tinted glass facing the river.

The old and new hotels are to be connected by a large registration area where Campau Avenue is, between Pearl and Lyon streets.

"The entry will be a covered motor lobby on Pearl Street," explains Jack Wilkie, an Amway spokesman. "All guests will register in the lobby being built where Campau Street is."

Plans for the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel, a complex that will include both the tower and the old hotel, call for two glass-enclosed skywalks connecting it to the civic center and to a 750-car parking ramp being built south of Pearl Street. The complex also will be connected to the Exhibitors Building on Lyon Street.

"The interiors will be tied in together," says Marvin DeWinter, project architect. "You could, for example, enter the front door of the Exhibitors Building on Lyon and walk all the way through one megast-structure."

The site of the old Pantlind has a rich history.

When Louis Campau first arrived here, the river was much wider at this spot. There were four islands. The first stood about where the new hotel is being built. The others trailed down the river.

In 1833, Campau sold the land where the Pantlind would one day stand to a millwright, Luther Lincoln, to build a sawmill.

There was a stipulation to the sale, however. Lincoln had to promise not to sell the land to one of Campau's competitors, a government surveyor and land speculator by the name of Lucius Lyon.

Lincoln started his mill and stuck by his agreement, but a year later, sold the land to Abram Wadsworth, who finished the mill. Wadsworth, in turn, promptly sold the parcel to Lyon, engendering Campau's wrath.

The sawmill was washed away a few years later in the flood of 1838.

By 1852 there was a warehouse on the spot and Daniel Ball, a banker who rose to the heights of wealth and success only to die in poverty, bought the property and erected a bank there in 1859.

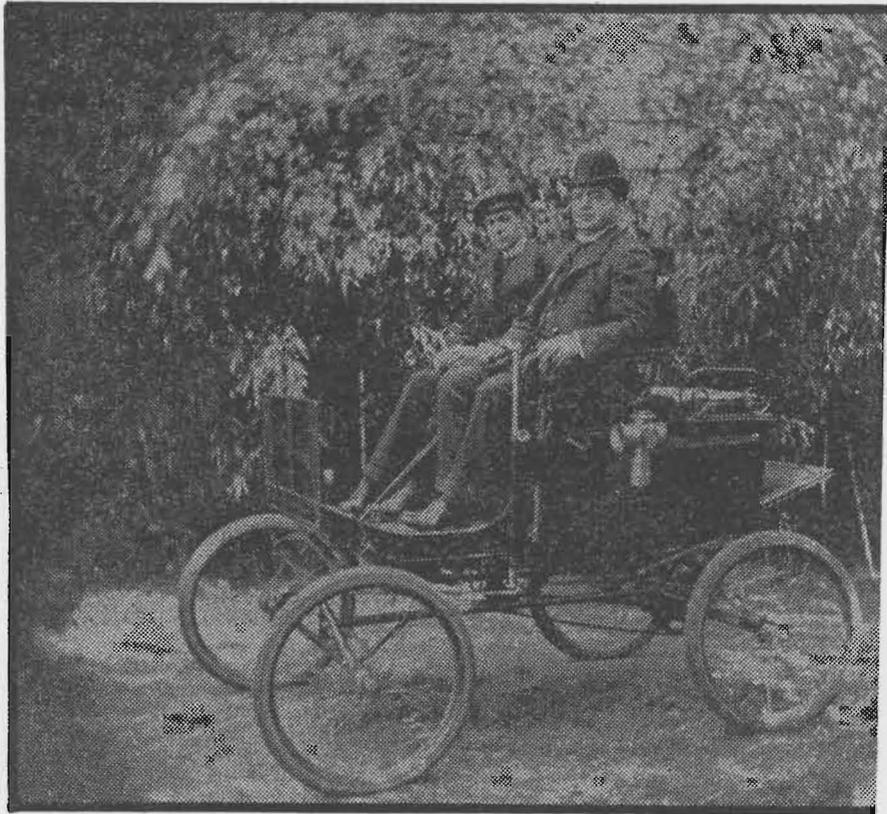
Two years later, Martin L. Sweet, a New York native who made a fortune here in the grain business, bought the bank and ran it as a very successful enterprise.

In 1868, Sweet branched out into the hotel business. He closed the bank and filled in the river between the shoreline and Island Number One.

On this newly created land, he erected a four-story hotel around the bank and let



The old Sweet's Hotel, predecessor to the Pantlind, was raised four feet to bring it above the flood level. Rooms went for \$2 a day.



The hotel run by J. Boyd Pantlind, right, and his son, Fred, was known out the world as a first-rate establishment.

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The grand opening of Sweet's Hotel on Sept. 23, 1869, according to an invitation found a few years ago, featured a grand ball with music by "Prof. Thomas' cornet band."

Five years later, the entire building was raised four feet when Canal Street was filled in to bring it above flood level. Hundreds of jack screws were placed on the foundation and turned at the signal of a whistle.

During the four days it took to raise the building, the hotel operated normally. Not a dish was broken.

Sweet's name lasted until 1902. An Ohio-born businessman of Scottish ancestry, J. Boyd Pantlind, had bought the business in 1898. He finally renamed it after his uncle, A. Vorhis Pantlind.

A few years later, with the furniture industry dominating downtown Grand Rapids, a group of Grand Rapids businessmen formed the Pantlind Hotel Building Co. and erected the present hotel.

J. Boyd Pantlind was made manager and, during his reign and that of his son Fred, the hotel was known throughout the world as a first-rate establishment.

The time when J. Boyd Pantlind son ran the establishment was of hotel life in Grand Rapids.

Katherine Pantlind Whinery Pantlind's daughter, remembers fondly. She also remembers grandfather, J. Boyd Pantlind, "natty dresser" with tailored suits by white percale, spats, a bow tie, and glasses attached to a grosgrain ribbon.

An avid collector with dozens of memorabilia from the old Whinery lives in East Grand Rapids. Her husband, George Whinery,

She is the oldest living descendant of J. Boyd Pantlind and, at 70, refers to him as "the matriarch of the Pantlind family."

"He was the most vivid character I ever knew," she says of her grandfather, "and he was the first grandchild and I received special treatment."

"He was a great horseman and he bought me my first pony. He took a great pride in my riding."

Whinery recalls that her grandfather was short, "rather round," and had "kling brown eyes." He was a great story teller with a gift for using words.

"He always had a smile and a good sense of humor," she says.

Pantlind

Continued

lind came during Prohibition. That was not an easy period for the hotel or its owners. Tony, the bartender, became Tony, the soda jerk.

"Granddad used to say, 'You lose money on the food and make it on the liquor.'

One of the more exciting times for a child in the Pantlind came whenever a circus arrived in town.

"When there was a parade, we'd be

watching wide-eyed from front row seats on the hotel's balcony overlooking Monroe Avenue," Whinery says. "What excitement — clowns, elephants and bands and bareback riders, and the calliope bringing up the rear."

The elder Pantlind had a 250-acre farm where Woodlawn Cemetery on Kalamazoo Avenue SE is today. Pantlind would feed his pigs from the hotel's garbage.

This profitable arrangement lasted until the city's mayor of the time, George Ellis, complained that the city was being shortchanged.

The city maintained its own piggery on

Fuller Avenue NE, about where Kent Community Hospital is, and Ellis complained that the Pantlind should be turning the hotel's garbage over for city use.

Pantlind refused and the entire matter ended up in court where Pantlind lost his case.

"J. Boyd always felt he'd been shafted," Whinery says.

J. Boyd Pantlind died Christmas Day, 1922. When recalling his death, Whinery refers to a newspaper article that appeared in the old Grand Rapids Herald, that stated:

"He contributed more to the nation's

happy opinion of Grand Rapids than any other single citizen who ever gave it the benefits of a long and fruitful career."

After the Pantlinds died, the hotel passed into other hands. It was owned by Jack, Ted and Charles Roberts when Amway bought it.

When the hotel closed last year, it boasted a long list of dignitaries and celebrities who'd stayed there, including William Jennings Bryan, Babe Ruth, James Cagney, Queen Juliana of the Netherlands, Boris Karloff, Spencer Tracy, John and Robert Kennedy and, of course, President Gerald R. Ford.

People Are Saying
Downtown Just Isn't
Like the Old Days...

