

# Mcmenamins KALAMA HARBOR LODGE

*E komo mai, e noho mai, e `ai a e, wala`au.* – Hawaiian for “Come in, sit, eat and talk.”

Yes, it’s a new building, but one that’s awash in history. This spot has been attracting people for centuries.

The lodge itself beckons you to the riverbank, boasting architecture resembling the historic Pioneer Inn in Lahaina, Maui (*right*). This was a tribute to Kalama’s namesake, a full-blooded Hawaiian, John Kalama. He was among the hundreds of Native Hawaiians who came to the Pacific Northwest in the early 1800s to work for the British Hudson’s Bay Company.

John remained in the area, married a native Nisqually woman and started a family. Many of their descendants still live in the area and celebrate the Kalama connection.

For centuries before John Kalama’s arrival, this area was home to native Chinook and Cowlitz people who maintained seasonal camps for fishing and gathering food near the Kalama River’s confluence with the Columbia River. One way in which the native peoples’ significance to the region is represented here is a beautiful sun mask in the hotel entrance. A framed caption of this locally carved piece tells its native history – and it’s also a nice compliment to the McMenamins sun icon (*right*) that has represented our company for decades.

The year 1870 was momentous in Kalama’s history – that’s when the Northern Pacific Railroad (NPR) began constructing its transcontinental rail line. This site where we now are was declared the railroad’s western terminus, and a town was quickly platted. Prices for town lots skyrocketed as bids came in from as far away as New York.

Kalama boomed, with its population coming from diverse backgrounds and economic stations. And of course there were plenty of hucksters and shysters to separate people from their money. But then, the bottom fell out in the



*The Pioneer Inn, built in 1905, is Hawaii’s oldest continuously operated hotel.*

mid-1870s. The much-coveted western terminus status was shifted from Kalama up to Tacoma. Suddenly, this tiny riverside community lost its livelihood and became all but a ghost town overnight.

Kalama’s saving grace was the advent of a railroad transfer ferry service. In lieu of a railroad bridge across the Columbia, a massive ferryboat was built in the mid-1880s to float entire trains (the cars of which were disconnected for the journey) from one side of the

river to the other. This service ensured Kalama business and status during its operation from 1884 to 1908. Across from the front desk in the lobby, you’ll see Jenny Joyce’s mural depicting the historic ferry and a few of its famous passengers.

During this period, other developments gradually evolved within the community. Fishing was always abundant, and the logging and lumber industry thrived. Much of the artwork around the hotel depicts these professions – have a look at the mural in the Harbor Lounge, featuring loggers, Babe the Big Blue Ox and a pint of Hammerhead.

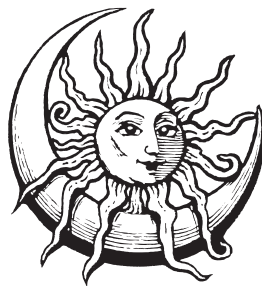
These industrial developments gradually led to the improvement of the harbor and the Port of Kalama. Today, this very port is a West Coast leader, serving companies from all over the world. Kalama is a small town, yet also an important cog in the wheel of global economics. On the 2nd floor, spot the mural depicting massive cargo ships, the old ferry, railroad, cars, grain silos and more.

## It’s Like a Museum, But with Beer!

People wonder how our hotel rooms are named and where the artwork and photos come from – let us explain...

### About the Rooms

Our teams of historians and artists began researching and writing, drawing and painting in the year prior to the property’s opening. Our goal was to represent the



experience and people from centuries ago to the present. And while it would be lovely to include every family, business or event that has local significance, we only have 40 guestrooms! So, the names on the doors run the gamut, from pioneering mayor Joanna Boatman to the filming of *Twilight* to Sasquatch. And beyond the lodging rooms, there are photos and artifacts celebrating other events, people and happenings.

## About the Artwork

If you've visited a McMenamins before, you have seen our galleries of art that portray people and events – but often with a twist or a wink. We call it historical surrealism. The artwork on walls, doors, ceilings and even pipes is based on research that then might be reinterpreted and embellished through our artists' own styles. Stroll from top to bottom, pint of beer or glass of wine in hand, to enjoy four floors of art and history. To “anchor” you in your dizzying journey, we've chosen a few more pieces to look for....

Past the front desk and to the right is a mural featuring Elvis lounging on a dock with Marlon Brando. Did you know that Elvis stayed one night in the local Columbia Inn in 1962, en route to film a movie during the Seattle World's Fair?



*Elvis at Kalama's Columbia Inn in 1962.*

Brando, however, was a frequent visitor to Kalama during the 1980s, when his son Christian took refuge here from a troubled Hollywood life. And hey, is that a UFO in the sky? Yes! It represents not only the nearby 1947 Kenneth Arnold sighting in which the term “flying saucer” was coined, but also our own McMenamins UFO Festival, held every May at Hotel Oregon (see [ufofest.com](http://ufofest.com)).

Continuing on into the Harbor Lounge, you cannot miss the hand-carved “papao,” an outrigger canoe suspended from the ceiling. The caption on the wall near the bar tells the tale of how it ended up here with us.

Take the colorful elevator to the 2nd floor – down the hall a bit, you'll see a photo of some young 1940s Cloverdale boys (*top of next column*). Their sweet faces are a reminder that this was a remarkable place to grow up. While the tiny Cloverdale community has since been incorporated, the boys' expressions are timeless.



Next, find the stairwell to the 3rd floor – the deep blue color recalls the Columbia River flowing by outside, the one constant in a stream of change within this community. Head upstairs for another touch of blue...

Find the blue lightbulb overhead? That may signify something. But we can't say what. The opera singers or maybe Jerry Garcia will explain later....

Opt for the stairwell up again, if you're able, toward the 4th floor – on the landing, there is a metal light fixture above that recalls the beautiful native baskets that were made in this region for centuries. Woven so tightly, the baskets were waterproof, ideal for transporting goods in our rainy climate or for boiling water over a fire.

Keep heading up! You've nearly reached the clouds – the Cloud Bar, that is, a perfect spot to enjoy sunny days on the deck or (maybe even better) stormy days from indoors. Have a look at the vintage 1920s Kalama High football jersey hanging just outside the bar. From the looks of it, with its frayed edges and hastily repaired holes, this knit jersey saw a lot of action on the field.

Finally, take the elevator all the way back down and head south on the path upriver. Just keep going, you're nearly there! Once you reach the Ahles Point Cabin, note the fantastic driftwood sculpture, the shiny drops of pitch on the fresh-cut beams overhead and the mischievous face embedded in the mantle. Outside, the river flows to the sea, while the face in the outdoor chimney seems to be singing a song – perhaps it's Woody Guthrie's “Roll On, Columbia, Roll On”?



Thanks for stopping by, for having an interest in Kalama's story and for becoming a part of our history. It may just take a few visits before you're able to truly take in everything the property has to offer. We hope to see you again soon.

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*If you have corrections or stories to add, please contact McMenamins Historian Tim Hills at [past@mcmenamins.com](mailto:past@mcmenamins.com) or 503.223-0109.*