

Jeff. Smiths Parlor Timeline

One of Skagway's most prominent buildings, the Jeff. Smith Parlor Museum is forever connected to the notorious outlaw Jefferson Randolph "Soapy" Smith. Although Smith led his nefarious band of con men from its cramped rooms, he only occupied the building for three short months before his death in a gunfight. What happened to the building after Smith's demise is a unexpected story with a surprising array of owners, uses, and even relocations.

Built as a Bank

By July, 1897 gold fever gripped the world and boats began off loading thousands of crazed stampedeers forming a chaotic tent town known as Skagway. By September the tent menagerie began to transition into an organized town with streets, businesses and wooden buildings. One of those early businesses, the First Bank of Skagway, constructed a small, simple two room building on the north side of Sixth Avenue just off Broadway in the fall of 1897. In only a few months the bank outgrew the building and moved.

Soapy's Start-up

In May, 1898 Jefferson "Soapy" Smith set up shop inside the building. Although a prominent sign above the door read "Jeff. Smith's Parlor," the building was a rental and still owned by the bank. For less than three months, Smith and his band of robbers and con artists ran their schemes to fleece unsuspecting stampedeers and intimidate the community. The use of the building as the Jeff. Smith's Parlor ended abruptly on July 8, 1898 when Smith was shot to death in a gunfight and his band arrested.

First Bank of Skagway ~ winter 1897 – spring 1898

- Door in center
- Not painted
- Built on north side of 6th, facing south (present day Bank of Alaska Building)

Jeff. Smith's Parlor ~ May – July, 1898

- Door moved to right
- Painted
- Lit signage and small projecting signs on front corners
- Interior modified into bar

Mirror Saloon ~ September – December 1898

- Unknown modifications

Clancy's ~ January – July 1899

- Façade sign removed
- Projecting signs remain

The Clancy Café ~ July – December 1899

- Unknown modifications

San Souci Restaurant and Oyster Parlor ~ December 1899 – Fall 1900

- Sign painted on front façade
- Projecting signs removed

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Skagway Fire Department Garage ~ 1900 – 1935

- Front door moved to left side, garage doors added to center-right in place of windows
- Dark paint, all signs removed
- Moved across 6th Street and front turned to face north in 1916

Jeff. Smiths Parlor Museum (Martin Itjen) ~ 1935 – 1950

- Itjen attempts to recreate Jeff. Smith's Parlor as a Museum
- Front façade renovated to include windows on left, door on right similar to 1898
- Interior refurbished, gold rush artifacts and ephemera added
- Additional buildings added to rear (off center)
- Itjen dies in 1942, George Rapuzzi purchases in 1945 and Jack Greisbach operates
- Museum closes in 1950

Jeff. Smiths Parlor Museum (George Rapuzzi) ~ 1963 – 2008

- Museum moved to current location on 2nd Ave, small buildings centered in 1964
- Side windows altered
- Additional artifacts, newspaper clippings, and ephemera added to interior
- Museum opens in 1967 but closes after George Rapuzzi's death in 1986
- Building falls into disrepair until Rapuzzi family sells to Rasmuson Foundation in 2007
- Rasmuson Foundation donates building to NPS in 2008

National Park Service ~ 2008 – forever

- Emergency stabilization completed
- Archeology survey and historic building report completed
- Structure lifted, rotted floors and foundation replaced, concrete foundation added
- Interior and exterior walls reinforced with new wood studs
- New cedar shingle roof installed over existing reinforced rafters
- High-tech energy efficient climate control system installed
- Artifacts curated, restored, and cleaned
- Fire and intrusion security system installed
- Open to public beginning May, 2016