

= Sauganash Hotel =

Sauganash Hotel (originally Eagle Exchange Tavern) is a former hotel ; regarded as the first hotel in Chicago , Illinois . It was located at Wolf Point in the present day Loop community area at the intersection of the north , south and main branches of the Chicago River . The location at West Lake Street and North Wacker Drive (formerly Market Street) was designated a Chicago Landmark on November 6 , 2002 . The hotel changed proprietors often in its twenty @-@ year existence and briefly served as Chicago 's first theater . It was named after Billy Caldwell , an interpreter in the British Indian Department .

= = History = =

Mark and Monique Beaubien , the owners and builders of the hotel , were French Indian traders . In 1826 they moved to Chicago on the advice of Mark 's brother Jean , who lived at Fort Dearborn . The Beaubiens settled in a small cabin on Wolf 's Point and continued their trade with the Indians . They built a tavern on the east bank of the south branch of the Chicago River at the point where the north and south branches meet . The tavern was named Eagle Exchange Tavern . In 1831 , they added a frame to the log structure to create Chicago 's first hotel , the Sauganash Hotel . When completed , it was one of only two residential structures on the south side of the main branch of the Chicago River , the other being that of Col. John B. Beaubien , Mark 's brother . The settlement had only twelve houses at the time . The hostelry immediately became famous , and when reconstructed later became the city 's largest and finest hotel . Immediately adjacent to the hotel 's public bar was Chicago 's first drug store .

The Greek Revival trim of the new hotel contrasted with the other eleven buildings of Chicago . The symmetry of its facade was typical to contemporary Greek Revival practiced on the East Coast . Juliette Kinzie , who came to Chicago from Connecticut in 1831 , described it as " a pretentious white two @-@ story building , with bright blue wood shutters , the admiration of all the little circle at Wolf Point " . The hostelry 's clientele transcended race , with natives and settlers enjoying each other 's company .

The flow of travelers and settlers intensified with the end of the Black Hawk War in 1832 . In 1833 the hotel housed election of the first town trustees of the newly formed Town of Chicago . Beaubien kept the Hotel until 1834 and during his ownership he regularly entertained guests with his violin . On August 18 , 1835 , two years after the Potawatomi natives signed the treaty agreeing to be moved to a reservation beyond the Mississippi River in northwestern Missouri , they selected 800 braves to perform their last war dance parade on a path that passed in front of the hotel . In 1835 , a Mr. Davis assumed control of the hotel , which subsequently had a series of proprietors . The building briefly served as Chicago 's first theater , and hosted the first Chicago Theatre company in November 1837 in an abandoned dining room . By 1839 , it returned to service as a hotel , but was destroyed by fire in 1851 , and subsequently torn down . The Wigwam was built in its place nine years later .

= = Honoree = =

Billy Caldwell " Sauganash " , who served as an interpreter for the Indian Agents , was the honoree of the hotel . Born in approximately 1780 , " Sauganash " was an Indian half @-@ breed , whose father was Colonel Caldwell , an Irish officer in the British Army stationed at Detroit ; his mother was a Pottawatomi . He was schooled at a Jesuit school in Detroit , where he learned English and French . Caldwell learned several Indian dialects . Billy Caldwell 's Indian Name was " Straight Tree " , but he was known by " Sauganash " , meaning Englishman in the Potawatomi language . As a warrior , Sauganash was under the influence of Tecumseh until his death and he became a Captain in the British Indian Department .

= = Theater = =

In 1834 (three years before Chicago incorporated as a city) , the hotel hosted the first professional public performance in Chicago at a cost of \$.50 (\$ 11 @. @ 85 today) for adults and \$.25 for children . The show promised a wide variety of talents including ventriloquism . In the following two years , several traveling showmen performed at the hotel . In 1837 , the Chicago Theater , which was the first local theater company , set up shop in the hotel 's abandoned dining room . Co @-@ managers Harry Isherwood and Alexander McKinzie procured an amusement license for the company from the city council , and it began performing a different billed show every night starting in late October or early November for approximately six weeks . The plays included titles The Idiot Witness , The Stranger , and The Carpenter of Rouen . Production of The Stranger took place in the dining room of the hotel . Following a six @-@ week engagement , the company went on tour until the following spring , when it returned to a different local venue .