

HISTORIC TIDBITS FROM HISTORIC HOTELS OF AMERICA®

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Members of Historic Hotels of America® are notable not only for their links to local, national and international history, but their remarkable architecture, artistic treasures and antique collections. They are also legendary for the dignitaries and celebrities who have graced their hallways, their connections to the world of literature and athletics and even for the unique job opportunities they offer. Here are some examples:

Art

- **Hotel du Pont in Wilmington, Del.**, boasts some of the most artistic and elegant public spaces in the United States. In addition, the hotel is decorated with more than 600 original paintings by more than 200 artists, primarily from the Brandywine River School, including works by three generations of the famed Wyeth family.
- **The Mission Inn Hotel & Spa in Riverside, Calif.**, a museum unto itself, was built between 1876 and 1931 by voracious collector Frank A. Miller. Following numerous tours abroad, Miller incorporated his extensive acquisitions into the inn's decor and its structure. Over 6,000 pieces, valued at more than \$5 million, are featured throughout the hotel. One of the hotel's masterpieces is the St. Francis of Assisi Chapel, which houses the magnificent 17th century, 10-karat gold-leaf Rayas Alter. Enhanced with Tiffany-designed stained glass windows and ornately carved woodwork, the chapel is a favorite spot for weddings.
- Located in the heart of downtown Portland, **The Heathman Hotel** is well-known for its support of the arts. The hotel houses an eclectic accumulation of over 250 contemporary works of art. Showcasing a variety of artists, including Andy Warhol, the collection does not adhere to conventional hotel art standards.
- Immortalized in Norman Rockwell's "Main Street, USA," **The Red Lion Inn in Stockbridge, Mass.**, is also home to a vast array of art and antiques. Artist's proofs by Norman Rockwell line the walls and are complemented by 18th century antiques, including Staffordshire china, pewter and an impressive collection of teapots. The inn's collection dates to 1873 when then owner Mrs. Charles H. Plumb scoured the Berkshires in search of collectibles. She even published a standing offer of "50 cents per pitcher and \$1 for an antique mirror." The collection has been augmented over the years, and continues today through the efforts of inveterate collector and owner Jane Fitzpatrick.
- In 1893, the opulent **Pfister Hotel in Milwaukee, Wis.**, opened its doors to the public. Guido Pfister spared no expense in creating a luxurious hotel that would rival any in the east. Along with his son Charles, Pfister amassed a large collection of American and European sculpture and paintings throughout the hotel's public spaces. Today, this display is recognized as the largest collection of Victorian art housed in any hotel in the world. Artists represented include Georges Achille-Fould, William Henry Hilliard, Thomas C. Lindsay and father and son Daniel Ridgway Knight and Louis Aston Knight.

Architecture

- The exterior of **The Henley Park Hotel in Washington, D.C.**, has more than 120 gargoyles. Two of the gargoyles have the faces of the hotel's architect and his wife.
- Known today as the **Ashland Springs Hotel in Ashland, Ore.**, the nine-story hotel was the tallest building between Portland and San Francisco when it was built in 1925.
- The magnificent original 18-story spiral stairway is still intact in the **Radisson Martinique on Broadway**, New York City's oldest operating hotel.

Authors

- Truman Capote always claimed that he was born in the **Hotel Monteleone in New Orleans**. Actually, Lilly Mae, his mother, rented a suite in the hotel and waited for Truman's arrival. She took a taxi from the hotel to a local hospital for Truman's actual birth.
- Stephen King is said to have found inspiration for "The Shining" from **The Stanley Hotel in Estes Park, Colo.**
- **Concord's Colonial Inn** in Concord, Mass., was the residence of author Henry David Thoreau.

Facts, Figures & Trivia

- Located in The Garden Court inside the **Palace Hotel** in San Francisco, California, the domed ceiling contains more than 70,000 pieces of iridescent glass, one of the largest expanses of colored glass in the world.
- At the **Omni Parker House** in Boston, JFK made his first public speech at age seven; he announced his candidacy for the U.S. Senate; he held his bachelor party; and he proposed to Jacqueline Bonvier.
- In 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., finished his "I Have a Dream" speech while a guest at the **Willard InterContinental Washington**.

The Famous

- Since its opening in 1925, the **Hawthorne Hotel in Salem, Mass.**, has been host to many well-known luminaries but it was the classic television sitcom *Bewitched* that brought the hotel its most notoriety. For several weeks in 1970 the cast and crew took up residence at the hotel while filming a two-part episode in Salem called "Salem Saga." In honor of the visit, the hotel's restaurant developed a special menu called, "when witches get together" featuring such delicacies as eye of newt ambrosia, green ghoulish stew and evil-eye purple onion.
- In 1933, **The Omni Shoreham Hotel** in Washington DC was outfitted with a special ramp and an elevator to accommodate the needs of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.
- Zsa Zsa Gabor married Conrad Hilton in the largest suite on the fifth floor of **La Fonda on the Plaza in Santa Fe, N.M.**, in 1942. She spent the second of her nine honeymoons at the hotel. Ironically, thirty years later Elizabeth Taylor stayed in the same suite. Elizabeth Taylor's first husband was Nicholas Conrad Hilton, Conrad's son (married May 6, 1950; divorced January 29, 1951). Stepmother and stepdaughter have stayed in the same suite.
- President Bill Clinton stayed at **The Driskill in Austin, Texas**, in May 1999. The hotel was in the midst of a renovation and had just restored the lobby -- including a custom-made marble floor. The Secret Service requested that the presidential limo be pulled through the main doors and into the lobby. The hotel declined this request fearing damage to the marble floor but offered to tent the main entry portico. A few weeks later, Hillary Clinton stayed at the hotel. Upon arrival, she informed the hotel's manager that she was happy that he had refused to have the president's limo driven in the glorious lobby.
- In the early 1940s at **The Fairmont Copley Plaza in Boston**, patrons paying \$1 cover charge could see skater Dorothy Lewis present her nightly Ice Revue in the hotel's ballroom. The show's program hailed the revue as "the finest spectacle of its kind in the world! It is a half hour artistic revue of grace, skill, speed and beautiful artists presented by a company of famous skating stars."
- **Tubac Golf Resort & Spa in Tubac, AZ** was the setting for the golf-themed movie, *Tin Cup*, which starred Kevin Costner.
- The historic register of the **Hotel Blackhawk in Davenport, Iowa**, bears the signatures of many famous guests, including Cary Grant, Carol Sandburg, Herbert Hoover, Richard Nixon, and Jack Dempsey.

Innovations

- **The Pfister Hotel in Milwaukee** was among the first hotels in the country to run entirely on electricity, using its own electric generators. Additionally, the hotel was one of the earliest hotels to have individual thermostat controls in each sleeping room.
- **Hotel Lombardy in Washington, D.C.**, retains its old-world charm by housing the city's only manually- operated hotel elevator.
- **The Williamsburg Inn in Williamsburg, Va.**, was John D. Rockefeller, Jr.'s 1937 vision to make a hotel as a comfortable Virginia estate for discriminating guests. Not surprisingly, the inn was the first hotel in America to have air-conditioning.

Meetings in History

- In June 1945, **The Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco** played host to the United Nations Conference on International Organization as delegates arrived to draft a charter for the organization. They played host to the U.S. Secretary of State, Edward Stettinus, who used the hotel's Garden Room to work on the draft of the charter, which was approved by the delegates at the San Francisco Opera House.
- In 1895, the parlor of the **Mohonk Mountain House in New Paltz, N.Y.**, hosted the first Mohonk Conference on International Arbitration, called by Mohonk founder Albert Smiley, whose Quaker background led him to seeking peaceful solutions to conflict. The annual meetings lasted until 1916 and are credited with being the precursor to the Hague Conference movement and the establishment of organizations such as the World Peace Foundation and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Wartime

- The U.S. Army converted the **Ojai Valley Inn and Spa in Ojai, Calif.**, into a training camp in 1941 and constructed Quonset huts along the resort's golf course. After the war, the links were repaired but altered, destroying two of its signature holes for more than 50 years. In December 1999, the "lost" holes were restored as #7 and #8.
- In 1942, the U.S. Army purchased the luxurious **Don CeSar Resort in St. Petersburg, Fla.**, for its assessed value of \$450,000. The hotel was transformed into a convalescent center for battle-fatigued World War II airmen. The velvet-draped and Spanish-tiled King Charles II ballroom was converted to a barracks-style mess hall. Local St. Petersburg girls also formed a group called the Bomb-a-Dears to aide in the re-socialization of recovering airmen. The center's chaplain performed an average of two weddings a week.
- **The Morrison-Clark Inn in Washington, D.C.**, originally built as two private townhouses, was renovated in 1923 by the Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and Airmen's Club. For the next 57 years, the mansion housed servicemen staying in Washington, with rates as low as 50 cents per night. During World War II, the club housed more than 40,000 servicemen per year.