

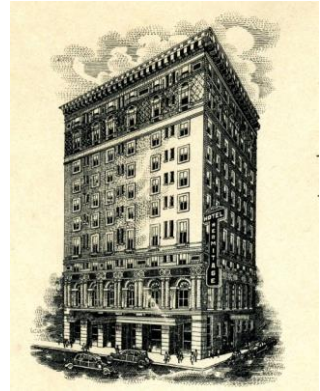
Reflections from the Past

The Hermitage Hotel – Historical Quarterly

2018 Volume 1

Mail Run

Roy E. Jones, who was a bellman at the Hermitage Hotel, walks up 6th Avenue after retrieving the hotel's daily mail from the Arcade post office. An automated camera snapped his photo and he bought the picture from a coin-operated vending machine. The photo is undated, however the movie being advertised for the nearby Knickerbocker Theater was released in December 1941.



The bellman uniform was a dark blue with a light blue collar and brass buttons. Mr. Jones's good-natured, energetic attitude and clean-cut look has been characteristic of the hotel's service staff from the very first in 1910 to the present day. Service to our guests has always been our mission.

Guests were offered ice water when first arriving to their room and were asked whether any clothing needed pressing. "There's an air in there, that something extra you can only feel when you're there" said a contemporary, Bob Pardue. "Nobody was even given anything in that hotel, be it food, mail, or a packet of cigarettes, unless it was on a silver tray."

The 1941 date mentioned above was also the time when the United States was compelled to enter World War 2. Bellman Jones became Pfc. Jones in the army. He saw military action in North Africa, Sicily and Italy where he gave his life in service to his country as of January 1944. His picture and story here are intended to recognize him and celebrate his life.



Checking In

Representing the present era while the hotel enjoys its second century, Kimberly Dunham and Lubin Aguilar stand ready to serve our guests. Gracing the wall is a beautiful painting sometimes referred to as “The Vanderbilt Ladies.” It is a John Singer Sargent style of painting. By the way, if that marble registration desk could talk, it could tell some stories!



Hotel Registration

Pictured here is a Hermitage Hotel registration pen set believed to be from the 1950s. Perhaps Gloria Swanson, the film star of *Sunset Boulevard*, signed in with this pen set, since she was a hotel guest in the 50s. The item was found on eBay.



The notion of some interesting old leather-bound registration books stacked away in a storage attic is appealing, however the old-fashioned books had given way to individual registration cards by the time the Hermitage Hotel opened. The origins of registration books date centuries back to places of lodging in Europe and the Far East. Innkeepers were required to keep records and the local constable would regularly review the names and origins of visitors in town by glancing at the books. The upgrade to the single registration card was due to the need for privacy as well as for better record-keeping. Newspaper reporters, however, made the rounds to local Nashville hotels in the early 20th century and the daily news regularly published lists of notable guests. Published guest names included the British founder of the Boy Scouts, Sir Baden-Powell (1912); baseball great Ty Cobb (1925); Charlie Chaplin, who walked in carrying in a custard pie (1918); and believe it or not - a mule nicknamed “Jar-Head” (1915) brought to the reception desk by the United Commercial Travelers after their annual downtown parade was finished.

A Message from the President

Amongst the crescendo of communications during the August 1920 legislative battle for womens suffrage came this telegram from the White House to the Hermitage Hotel Branch of Western Union. It was addressed to Mrs. Catt, the national pro-suffrage leader who stayed at the Hermitage Hotel for six weeks, although first arriving with light luggage for just a short visit. The telegram was an information copy of the one sent to the Speaker of the House, Seth Walker, who had reversed his position from a pro to anti-suffrage legislator, causing great turmoil.

The Hermitage Hotel became headquarters for both the pro and anti suffrage campaigners. It was a lively place indeed! Some insight as to the extent of written communications may be realized by the fact that the August telegraph and telephone services at the Nashville headquarters of the National Woman's Party amounted to \$700 (equivalent to more than \$8,000 in current dollars.)

Form 1204

CLASS OF SERVICE	SYMBOL
Telegram	
Day Letter	DL
Night Message	NM
Night Letter	NL

WESTERN UNION
TELEGRAM

NEWCOMB CARLTON, PRESIDENT GEORGE W. E. ATKINS, FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT

CLASS OF SERVICE	SYMBOL
Telegram	
Day Letter	DL
Night Message	NM
Night Letter	NL

RECEIVED AT
HERMITAGE HOTEL BRANCH
59NFY AH 56 GOVT
THE WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC 633 PM AUG 13 1920
MRS GARRIE CHAPMAN CATT
HERMITAGE HOTEL NASHVILLE TENN
THE PRESIDENT HAS JUST WIRED THE FOLLOWING TO THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE
NASHVILLE QUOTE MAY I NOT IN THE INTEREST OF NATIONAL HARMONY AND VIGOR
AND OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE LEADERSHIP OF AMERICANS IN ALL LIBERAL
POLICIES EXPRESS THE EARNEST HOPE THAT THE HOUSE OVER WHICH YOU PRESIDE
WILL CONCUR IN THE SUFFRAGE AMENDMENT
J P TUNULTY
827PM

Another form of communication, and one rarely seen today, was paging for a person throughout the lobby by a bellman. It was during a quiet moment one evening in August 1920 when a lawyer pulled a prank and tipped a "bellhop" to slowly walk throughout the lobby and adjacent hallways. He loudly and repeatedly paged a Senator Brandegee of Connecticut, who was a staunch, and nationally known foe of voting rights for women. In fact the senator was nowhere near Tennessee, but the paging set off a rush to the telephones and much lively animation by dozens of pro suffrage ladies around the lobby who knew his presence would have raised the voltage of the already highly-charged campaign.

The art of conversation, face to face discussion, and the advantages to two way conversation, are of course, hard to top for effectiveness and results. Networking in a social setting was part of the agenda on Sunday afternoon, August 8, 1920 when "More than forty automobiles gathered in front of the Hermitage Hotel to collect passengers, and then motored out to .. a lovely party enjoyed by all." These were the so-called anti suffrage ladies campaigning actively against the woman's right to vote. These ladies were dubbed the "home, heaven, and mother party." They were intent on keeping states rights, the status quo of the old South and the gracious qualities they felt were embodied in all that.

During this colorful and hard-fought campaign, the voting position each legislator pledged was signified by either a yellow or a red rose in his lapel. The press therefore was able to say it was a "War of the Roses." As an aside remark, this expression also used centuries earlier in England over a battle for the throne. Tennessee's gubernatorial campaign of 1886, when brothers Robert L. Taylor and Alfred A. Taylor ran against each other as democrat and republican, also played up this theme, that battle waged with red and white roses worn by supporters.

Hotel Stationery & Musical Talent

Even in today's age of text messaging and e-mails on the fly, a written letter or note card carries a personal touch and conveys that extra something special - warmth.

This example of hotel stationery that has survived displays the lithographer's art as well as an advertisement for the hotel, even naming the managers as "go to" contacts. The hotel offered a stenographer service to guests who preferred a typewritten over a handwritten letter or postcard; (the stenographer probably was not utilized by the writer in this example.)

Tom Parker later became famous as the man who made Elvis famous. Elvis himself frequented the Hermitage Hotel.

The hotel was situated just a block away from pioneer radio station WSM (home of the Grand Old Opry), the nearby War Memorial Auditorium, and also the yet to be legendary but always popular Ryman Auditorium. The Hermitage was a favorite place for many a musician visiting Nashville including band leaders Paul Whiteman, "King of Jazz"; Al Jolson, "The World's Greatest Entertainer"; and Grace Moore "The Tennessee Nightingale." Big band leader guests included Tommy Dorsey, Jimmy Dorsey, Woody Herman, and Benny Goodman (who visited the manager's apartment after his show for a 1 am breakfast of scrambled eggs.)

ROBERT MEYER HOTELS
HOTEL PATRICK HENRY, ROANOKE, VIRGINIA
FARRAGUT HOTEL, KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE
HERMITAGE HOTEL, NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE
WINDSOR HOTEL, JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA
HOTEL SIR WALTER, RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA
HOTEL ROOSEVELT, JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA
HOTEL EMERSON, BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

HOTEL HERMITAGE

MEYER HOTEL CO.
PROPRIETORS

ROBERT R. MEYER, PRESIDENT.

FIREPROOF
EUROPEAN PLAN

NASHVILLE 3 TENN.

July 26, 1947

Mr Lem Coley
Radio station
WRES
Alexander City Alabama

Dear Mr Coley;

Enclosed is some Eddy Arnold material.
Hope this will help you out, sorry we cant be with
you folks, but we are at present on tour and will be
out of town for the next two Months playing our dates.

Wishing you all the luck with your talent search .

Sincerely yours

Tom Parker
Thomas A Parker

Mgr Eddy Arnold show .

The 1947 date on this letter happens to be just about the time when the Hermitage Hotel's recently retired orchestra leader, Francis Craig, began to top the charts with America's most popular song, "Near You." By October, twenty-four record pressing plants were falling behind on orders that eventually would exceed 2.3 million, the first hit record out of Nashville. But that's another story ...



Quotes & Sources

Photo of Roy Jones was donated by his brother, Elza, who was a Hermitage bellman as well.

Silver service quote by Bob Pardue, "What the Bellmen Knew", Nashville Magazine, September 1986, author Peter Mikelbank. Mr. Pardue is also quoted extensively in "The Hermitage at 100 - Nashville's First Million Dollar Hotel." Mr. Pardue worked most of his adult life at the Hermitage Hotel and served as its historian.

Photo of present day registration desk, compliments of photographer Jerry Atnip

Telegram compliments of Tennessee State Library and Archives

Paging for Senator Brandegee - Mary French Caldwell, "There Was Midsummer Madness in Nashville Fifty Years Ago", The Tennessean, August 30, 1970, page 15

Forty carloads of anti-suffs - Carol Lynn Yellin & Janann Sherman, "The Perfect 36", Iris Press, 1998, page 97

Here's to being an effective communicator !

Do you have some special memories of The Hermitage Hotel ?

To share your own "news" please drop by and see Tom Vickstrom, telephone 615-345-7123
or e-mail archives@thehermitagehotel.com

~ The Hermitage Hotel 231 Sixth Avenue North Nashville, Tennessee 37219 ~ www.thehermitagehotel.com ~