



{ SEQ CHAPTER \h \r 1 }

PALACE HOTEL “100 Years of Tradition” A Chronology 1909-2009

After the 1906 earthquake, Frederick W. Sharon, son of the original owners of the Palace Hotel, brought architect George W. Kelham to San Francisco to design the new caravansary. The new hotel, in a modern way, was as revolutionary as the first. After completing the design, Kelham created a new summer home for Sharon in the hills above Menlo Park, California. He subsequently drew the plans for the San Francisco Public Library in the Civic Center, 1912. That structure currently houses the Asian Art Museum.

1909 April 24. Artist Maxfield Parrish met with Frederick Sharon, owner of the almost completed Palace Hotel on April 20, 1909. From Windsor, Vermont, on April 24, 1909, Parrish wrote: “I will make for the barroom in the Palace Hotel, San Francisco, a painting measuring about 6' x 16' for the sum of six thousand dollars to be delivered on the first of November 1909. If you will kindly acknowledge the receipt of this, as far as I am concerned, it will be all the agreement necessary.” The letter is signed with artistic flourish. Palace advertising currently (2009) places the value of this piece of art at \$2,500,000.

Dec. 13. The downtown district looked more like the old days than ever before. Bright lights gleamed from every window of the new Renaissance-Baroque Palace Hotel. Lights were being tested in preparation for the opening event. In many parts of the building, workmen were busy all night making final preparations. The building was modeled after the luxury hotels of Paris.

Dec. 15. John C. Kirkpatrick, managing director of the rebuilt Palace, hosts a banquet for San Francisco officials in the new caravansary's Great Court. A total of 765 people pay \$15 each to attend. Mayor Edward Robeson Taylor tells crowd: “Lovers of San Francisco — The Palace Hotel has risen again, and we are here tonight to celebrate its Easter....The beauty of its architecture together with the spirit of hospitality which made the old hotel so justly famous, makes this new Palace Hotel as much an institution of San Francisco as is its City Hall, so that we could scarcely think of San Francisco without thinking of the Palace Hotel.”

Governor James Gillette's comment: “No other building has been watched with keener interest than this. And now, with this as a monument to a great city rebuilt, tonight we are assembled here to dedicate it as a monument, to lift the veil around it, and reveal its magnificence to the world.”

1909 Dec. 16. Former California State Senator William C. Ralston, Jr., son of the Palace Hotel's builder in 1875, was the first to sign the register of the new hotel at 1 p.m. Thereafter, the hotel's great golden key was taken to the roof, attached to five colorful gas-filled balloons and sent skyward. The plan was for the key to float out over the Pacific Ocean. But the winds changed and the key headed toward Oakland. The entire hotel was open between 1 and 3 p.m. for the public to wander. Thousands took advantage of the opportunity to view San Francisco's greatest attraction.

Dec. 16. Banquet for 1,500 at 7 p.m. A proud California Governor James Gillette acted as toastmaster. Cost for the evening was \$5, not including wine. Newspaper headline: "San Francisco dines again in splendor." Tables were set in the Main Dining Room, Grill Room, Ball Room and Concert Room. "Rarely, if ever in the social history of San Francisco, has one been permitted to see so many beautiful women so handsomely gowned and so splendidly jeweled. It was like a fairyland of loveliness, oftentimes dreamed of, but not often seen."

Completion of the new hotel required 44 months of construction.

Room prices in 1909 varied. For a one-person room with a detached bath, the cost was \$2.00; add a private bath and rates were between \$2.50 and \$6.00. A two-person room, with detached bath, was \$3.00; and with a private bath, the range was from \$4.00 to \$7.00. Suites began at \$7.00. Club breakfasts were priced from 40 cents to 80 cents.

1,500 people streamed into the new Palace Hotel to tour the hotel that had 685 guest rooms and suites. There were accommodations for 1,200. Rooms were furnished with specially designed brass beds and mahogany furniture. Telephone service was provided in every room.

The Palace featured three large suites representing the highest example of hotel luxury. Each had four large bedrooms and a private dining room in addition to a spacious sitting room.

The Men's Bar, celebrated in the old hotel as the "unofficial capital of California," reopens. Maxfield Parrish's painting was hung above the bar. "The Pied Piper of Hamelin," acquired at a cost of \$6,000, highlights the Piper in a red-peaked cap leading 26 figures. Parrish, most famed for saloon art, built a reputation for this type of painting. He created "Sing a Song of Sixpence" for the Hotel Sherman in Chicago and "Old King Cole," which gave its name to the art bar in the Hotel Knickerbocker in Times Square and more recently to a room at the St. Regis Hotel in New York.

A major feature of the new Palace Hotel was the attractively decorated nursery where children could remain "for a few hours or a few days." Trained nurses were always in attendance.

Kitchen: With Prussian precision, Chef Ernest Arbagast ruled a domain of 125 cooks from a glass enclosed office that was placed in the middle of the room.

1909 The new Palace was served by a \$300,000 electrical plant. This plant was significantly larger than those in many small towns.

Dec. 17. The first formal ball to be given in the Palace took place this evening (Friday) under the auspices of *Entre Nous Cotillion Club* that also had opened the ballroom at the old Palace in 1875.

Dec. 19. Among the brilliant events marking the opening of the hotel was a dance to which society folk and military officers were invited. Sponsorship of the event was provided by the captain and wardroom officers of the USS *Alert*. Officers and ladies from the Presidio and Mare Island were in attendance as well as the leading society women of San Francisco.

Dec. 31. It is already an accepted fact that the new Palace is *the* venue in San Francisco for all important banquets.

Shortly after the opening of the new hotel, management took delivery of a gold dinner service manufactured by Brauscher of Bavaria. Brauscher was a firm that specialized in providing hotel services. This elegant slightly cream-colored china, still extant, is bordered with actual gold.

1910 Jan. 10. Afternoon tea service was inaugurated. The corridors of the Grand Court were crowded with society people who celebrated the first day of the innovation with the greatest enthusiasm.

1913 Dec. 20. Elegance was the word associated with the afternoon tea dance at the Palace Hotel. Considered one of the gayest and most picturesque of entertainments that brought social clans from all bay cities for a gala Christmas party, it was the first dance in the mid-winter series of *dansants* that were staged in The Garden Court, under the auspices of 30 leading hostesses.

1914 Famed French born Palace Hotel Chef Jules Dauviller resigned his \$1,000 a month position in response to a summons from his native country. Like tens of thousands of his countrymen, he rejoined the military unit to which he had once belonged during his three years of obligatory service in boyhood days.

December. San Franciscans lamented the passing of the city's last two-bit bar when the Palace Hotel ended a city tradition dating back to the Gold Rush. Until now every drink in the Pied Piper Bar had cost 25 cents. However, this high price included a sumptuous meal, including salads, breads, ham, turkey and chicken. Historically, the city boasted numerous two-bit establishments. Among them were the Occidental and Oriental hotels, the Pantheon and the Cliff House; all had previously succumbed. The Pied Piper had been the last to change.

1915 April 22. Palace manager Charles A. Cooke, who has held the post since the death of John C. Kirkpatrick four months ago, resigned. He is replaced with Obadiah Rich, a man who has been connected with the Palace and old Grand hotels for the past 35 years.

1915 July 21. Hotel turned into “monstrous dining hall.” Rotarians and their wives, a total of 1,909, gathered for a banquet at the Palace. This was said to be the greatest banquet, numerically, ever held on one floor of a hotel. To accommodate a party of this magnitude required the use of 41,800 pieces of china and glassware and 26,600 pieces of silverware. The kitchen served 1,000 pounds of fresh baked rolls, 2,000 fileted soles, 500 saddles of lamb, 10,000 asparagus tips, 15,000 oysters and 150 gallons of coffee. There were 300 waiters. Simultaneously, 1,000 hotel guests, not associated with the Rotarians, were also served dinner.

October 19. Thomas Alva Edison, wizard of electricity, was honored by Northern California telegraph operators with a banquet at the Palace Hotel. Menus were prepared in Morse code and orders were placed with telegraph keys along wires strung from table to table, each adorned with a realistic appearing telegraph pole. Automobile titan Henry Ford, a friend of Edison, also participated in the banquet.

1917 September 17. The United States entered World War I in April 1917. The Palace Ballroom was transformed into a card and reading room for soldiers in uniform. Hotel regulations stated that soldiers were to be disturbed only when there was “urgent need for a ballroom.” San Francisco society women greeted soldiers and sailors in this unique facility. Decorated with flags and flowers, the ballroom was furnished with a Victrola and a “mechanical piano.” When necessity required the moving of soldiers, men were shifted to another hotel facility. The ballroom was open daily from 6:30 p.m. until 11:00 p.m. and all day on weekends.

Hotel guests frequently complained about the “shrieking” bellboys. A voice specialist, Mrs. Kate L. Reinstein of Boston, was retained by hotel management. It became mandatory that the boys were required to participate in twice weekly classes to learn proper deportment and voice modulation.

1918 February. Palace Hotel transformed into giant recruiting center for the U.S. Army.

April 2. Palace Hotel’s Rose Room was converted into the Chinese Room. The new chamber took on a Chinese ambiance with the addition of a black carpet with pale jade green and white in a cherry blossom design. The carpet was woven especially for this room. Hangings were tapestried in a pagoda and bamboo design on a jade green and mauve striped satin and silk. The general atmosphere was one of light and warmth, with the Oriental colors modulated to an artistic harmony.

Aug. 6. Wartime manpower shortages brought about change even in page boys. Three young Chinese lads began work, all dressed in fancy Oriental costumes of lavender and blue silk. They were placed under the direction of Roy West, head bellman at the Palace.

Oct. 14. Until now, since originally opening in 1875, all food servers have been men. Wartime labor shortages necessitated the hiring of women. Sixteen female waitresses were employed today. They were permitted to serve breakfast and lunch; however, patrons were assured, absolutely, that male waiters, exclusively, would *always* serve dinner.

1919 Sept. 17. In his effort to win congressional approval for the Versailles Peace Treaty bringing an end to World War I, President Woodrow Wilson hosted two important luncheons in the Palm Court of the Palace Hotel. Wilson spoke first to 1,600 “gaily dressed” women at 12:30 p.m. on Sept. 17. “The President, the newspaper men, the waiters and the Secret Service agents, were the only trousered persons allowed to remain in the arena.” Two excited women fainted but were quickly revived. Thousands thronged the Palace lobby and corridors to glimpse President and Mrs. Wilson. First Lady Edith Wilson, who was “duly cheered” captured the collective imagination of those gathered. The presidential party took rooms at the St. Francis Hotel.

Sept. 18. President Wilson returned to the Palm Court today to address a luncheon group of 1,500 businessmen and civic leaders in his ceaseless effort to overcome congressional opposition to the Versailles Peace Treaty that included a provision for United States membership in an international organization known as the League of Nations. The throng rose to its feet applauding when Wilson asked: “You are the leaders of the free people of the world. Can’t you come and help us?” The traveling press declared this presentation one of the most convincing of hundreds delivered by the President on his coast-to-coast campaign.

Oct. 1. The Garden Court at the Palace was buried beneath a sea of waving American flags when 1,800 participated in a luncheon for U.S. Senator and former California Governor Hiram Johnson. Decorations of dahlias and greenery embellished the speakers’ table. Other tables, crowded so closely together that waiters could scarcely squeeze between them, were decorated only with water glasses and essential tableware. Unlike most political banquets, the menu was based on simplicity of fish or chicken, ice cream and coffee. The pugnacious Johnson, a Republican who hoped to become his party’s presidential nominee, made an impassioned harangue against Woodrow Wilson’s plan to participate in the League of Nations.

Oct. 19. Belgian monarchs conquer San Francisco. King Albert and Queen Elizabeth of Belgium, on world tour to thank those who had supported their small country during the Great War, visited the city. Albert received a unique welcome at the Palace Hotel luncheon when he was installed as an honorary member of the five business clubs of the city. For an hour before the noon luncheon, the hotel lobby became an “impassable sea” of would-be participants. Though allegedly an exclusive men’s function, there were scores of ladies among the guests, including the notable Alma de Bretteville Spreckels. In military uniform, King Albert entered with the mayor. The menu included tomatoes stuffed with shrimps en mayonnaise, roast spring lamb, and ice cream. In addition to the King, his party included Prince Leopold, Duke of Brabant, and Herbert C. Hoover, former head of the Belgian Relief Organization during the war. All sat at the head table. The table was beautifully decorated with yellow chrysanthemums interspersed with asparagus ferns and strewn with the choicest varieties of red, white and purple California grapes, the gift of California’s grape growers.

1919 Oct. 19. Queen Elizabeth of Belgium who had been speaking to a women's luncheon at the St. Francis Hotel, later in the afternoon, between 5 and 6 p.m., received the women of San Francisco in the ballroom at the Palace Hotel. "The ballroom, blooming with flowers and brilliant with its lighting, called for no great stretch of the imagination to mean to the throngs who visited it a drawing-room in some European Palace." Those who managed to meet the stylishly dressed queen described the event as a notable event in their lives.

With the anticipated prohibition of sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages, the Palace Hotel's famed barroom has been transformed into a tea lounge.

1920 In the decade before 1930, when an increased number of cross-bay commuters justified continuation of all-night ferryboat service, the Palace offered special sanctuary for those who "inadvertently" missed the last scheduled boat. Regular commuters were given cards signed by the Palace Hotel manager assuring special room rates along with a kit containing pajamas, toilet articles and fresh socks at no extra charge.

May 22. The San Francisco Club convened at the Palace Hotel for luncheon which included Cosmopolitan Salad, Fillet of Sole *Americane*, Duchesse Potato, New Peas, Ice Cream, Cakes and Coffee. The price per person was \$1.00.

Summer. Palace Hotel is the headquarters for the Democratic National Convention that is being held at Exposition Hall (later called Civic Auditorium). This is the first national nominating convention staged in San Francisco. Ohio Governor James Cox was nominated for president and Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin Delano Roosevelt was nominated for vice president. In November, the Democratic ticket was soundly defeated by Warren G. Harding.

1921 Last San Francisco fire horses left the Department stables and trotted into retirement .

Jazz made its appearance at the Palace Hotel. Conservative old guard guests became increasingly annoyed by the gradual introduction of tangos, fox-trots and other modern dances. Management placed discrete signs in the ballroom to remind guests that such gyrations would not be tolerated; however, there was never any attempt at enforcement.

Jan. 21. Patrons gathered at the Palace to bid farewell to the Men's Bar, the celebrated establishment that had been designed by Swen Christensen for the reopening of the hotel in 1909. Whereas once Palace patrons took their drinks straight, the closing of the Pied Piper was toasted with Ginger Ale.

June 3. Palace Hotel manager Halsey E. Manwaring reported that, commonly, patrons consumed 2,000 pounds of California-grown rice per month. He noted that it was a fixed rule of the hotel that whenever a local product was found equal to a foreign or out of state product, the California product was chosen.

1921 Dec. 3. Internationally acclaimed hero of World War I, Ferdinand Foch, Marshal of France, while on a triumphal tour of the United States sponsored by the American Legion, was feted on Market Street with a parade termed “the greatest reception ever accorded a world figure in California.” Following a long day of sightseeing, a military reception in the Presidio and a meeting with the city’s French colony at the Dreamland Ice Rink, he was honored with a banquet in the Palm Court at the Palace.

Dec. 20. The Pied Piper bar, which had been closed since the advent of Prohibition and preserved in the hope that some turn in the tide of Prohibition might make it possible to put it to use again, passed into oblivion with the pounding of hammers and ripping of saws. The half dozen workmen tearing it apart were seen as the pallbearers. Frank G. Drum, president of the Palace Hotel Company, manager Halsey E. Manwaring and a group of prominent San Franciscans looked on as mourners.

1923 July. Palace management was alerted that President Warren G. Harding had suffered food poisoning while cruising in the presidential yacht in the Inside Passage of Alaska. The president was treated in Seattle and, thereafter, brought by fast train to San Francisco. A presidential suite, Room 8064 was readied for Harding’s arrival. Rooms for Army Chief of Staff General John J. Pershing (former commander of the American Expeditionary Force during World War I) were also booked on the same floor. Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, who had been traveling with Harding, was assigned a suite on the seventh floor, one story below the president’s.

July. Palace Hotel exterior was patriotically wrapped in red, white and blue bunting in anticipation of President and Mrs. Harding’s arrival.

Aug. 2. President Warren G. Harding ,who had suffered “food poisoning” while cruising the Alaska coast aboard the presidential yacht, died in Room 8064 — the presidential suite. The next day the presidential suite was crowded with people. The open casket was banked with flowers. City officials and politicians visited the Palace to gaze upon the deceased president.

Aug. 2 (late at night). Colorful bunting that had draped the Palace Hotel in anticipation of the president’s arrival was quietly removed and was replaced with black crepe. The presidential banner was also removed and replaced with the American flag set at half staff.

Aug. 3. Late in afternoon, president’s now boxed casket was carried down the eighth floor corridor to the freight elevator that proved to be too small. Thus, it became necessary to stand the deceased president’s remains on end . The casket traversed the kitchen and was carried through The Garden Court to a waiting Pierce Arrow hearse at the hotel’s New Montgomery Street entrance.

- 1923** Green Goddess Salad Dressing created at the Palace. In his determination to pay tribute to actor George Arliss (1868-1946) for his starring role in the William Archer play *The Green Goddess*, the Palace's executive chef experimented with a new salad dressing that, like the play, became a major hit with the public. *The Green Goddess* was also the name of a silent film (1923) and a Warner Brothers remake (1930). George Arliss starred in the play and both film versions. The dressing recipe blended green onion with mayonnaise, tarragon, parsley, vinegar and anchovies.
- 1926** Jan. 2. Requests for more rapid barber services resulted in the construction of a new tonsorial parlor equipped with 17 modern Kochs-Chicago chairs upholstered in handsome blue grain leather. "In this new shop, we aim to give the type of service which the discriminating man expects to get in a high-class barbershop. Every convenience possible has been installed for the comfort of our patrons." The new hair cutting parlor was situated on the New Montgomery street side of the hotel and had a sidewalk entrance as well as one off the lobby. By the end of the year, the new shop was staffed with 20 full-time barbers and seven manicurists.
- 1927** Sept. 16. The American aviator Colonel Charles Lindbergh, acclaimed as a hero because of his solo flight across the Atlantic from New York to Paris, France, in May of this year, "drops from the clouds" at Mills Field (San Francisco Municipal Airport). He flew to San Francisco to encourage the development of commercial aviation and the construction of airports. Lindbergh received an extraordinary welcome. Following a two-hour rest at the Bellevue Hotel where he stayed, at 6 p.m., he was feted with a major banquet set in The Garden Court of the Palace Hotel. The great room was patriotically decorated with American flags and bunting. A total of 1,800 participated in this gala that was hosted by popular San Francisco Mayor James Rolph, Jr., who presented Lindbergh with a medal making him an honorary citizen of the city. Radio station KPO had set up microphones at the head table in order to broadcast Lindbergh's comments for a live transmission.
- 1929** June 28. The Hotel of Stars. "Starting at the Palace Hotel, tonight's great parade of Hollywood stars will inaugurate the gala opening celebration of the new Fox Theatre, located on Market Street at Eighth. For this historic occasion, official headquarters of the stars and dignitaries of the Fox and West Coast Theatres are in the Palace Hotel. It is but fitting that The Palace, so long and closely associated with the progress of California, should have been selected for this signal honor."
- At 7 p.m., precisely, six bombs were exploded near the Palace Hotel signaling the beginning of a parade of luminaries participating in the opening of the Fox Theatre. The procession began at the hotel. Along the parade route, thousands of spectators watched the U.S. Army and Navy bands lead a convoy of 60 brand new Imperial and De Soto cars.
- 1933** Oct 5. The Rose Room Bowl at the Palace Hotel reopened with a gala affair. There was a new decor and lighting scheme that promised to make a major attraction of the once famed room. Redecoration was the work of famed San Francisco designer Bruce Porter. The Rose Room was terraced around an oval shaped dance floor. This intimate venue became the scene of regular dinner concerts and dancing.

1933 Oct. 30. With an atmosphere redolent of continental smartness and yet with a San Francisco flair, the Palm Court, which between 1909 and 1920 had served as the hotel lobby and for the past decade as a restaurant with little tables dotting the room, opened at noon with a new guise—that of a French café lounge and garden restaurant. The Palm Court was now thoroughly continental in its smartness reminiscent of Paris. Tables were turquoise blue. Ferns, bamboos, vines and other potted plants hid the historic palms. Chinese scatter rugs replaced the regal red carpets. Walls and the antique glass ceiling had a color scheme of coral and blue. Only the massive crystal chandeliers and marble columns were recognized in the metamorphosis. In pre-Earthquake days, the Palm Court had been the main carriage entry from New Montgomery Street that witnessed the arrival of presidents, kings, queens and notables of every country. The elegant chamber was done over under the precise supervision of San Francisco designer Bruce Porter and the watchful eye of Mrs. William B. Johnstone, granddaughter of William Sharon. The Palm Court became a quaint garden spot that “smacks of Paris smartness” with flowers in more or less formal pattern.

1934 April 9. The Palace Hotel sponsored “Old San Francisco Night,” a dinner dance benefit for the Children’s Hospital. Sponsors included the social elect of San Francisco and the Peninsula. Outside, guests saw old-time horse-drawn carriages and bicycle racks that had been so familiar at the turn of the century. Almost the entire first floor of the hotel was transformed to create necessary ambiance. “Gray-haired beaux and belles of a gone but not forgotten time participated with the youth of modern days ...” Champagne glasses were repeatedly lifted in salutes to the past. Art creating the backdrop was the work of Palace Hotel artist Antonio Sotomayer. Entertainment for the evening was under the direction of Cameron Prud’homme, well known for his direction of Bohemian Club plays. There were accordion and harmonica players, along with wandering minstrels, singing waiters and other colorful characters. The “Texas-Tommy” and “Cake Walk” as well as the Florodora type of ballet were revived, although critical scribes suggested that the people just didn’t dance the “Texas-Tommy” with the old verve that once highlighted the spirited dance on the Barbary Coast.

Dec. 20. “The Pied Piper”, famed painting by artist Maxfield Parrish, which for 14 years since the advent of Prohibition had been stored at the M.H. de Young Memorial Museum, amid much ceremony, was returned home to the Palace Hotel bar. California’s new State liquor control law, making it legal to sell hard liquor by the drink in hotels, restaurants, clubs and the like, became effective today. “The Pied Piper” was returned to its place in the old bar. Hotel manager Archibald H. Price planned a luncheon in celebration of the occasion. The new Pied Piper was soon acclaimed as “one of the World’s Seven Great Bars.”

1935 March 1. A new cocktail lounge, decorated in California style, christened the “Happy Valley” opened. A gala occasion, the glittering first night was sponsored by the Chamber Opera Group. “Happy Valley” had been chosen because that name had once been applied to the district of San Francisco where the original Palace Hotel was erected during the 1870s. The room decor was reminiscent of the city’s early days with heavy furniture and murals of Lotta Crabtree, a Gold Rush child performer who had gone east to win national fame as an actress, and Irish seductress Lola Montez in gilt frames. These elegant murals, were painted by young Bolivian artist Antonio Sotomayer.

1939 Mrs. William Johnstone, granddaughter of William Sharon who was born in the hotel, acquired ownership of the caravansary.

Alfred A. Knopf published *Bonanza Inn — America's First Luxury Hotel* written by historian Oscar Lewis and Carroll D. Hall. No other literary event was more significant in the song and story of the historic Palace Hotel that opened in 1875 and burned the afternoon of April 18, 1906, following the Great Earthquake. A story told with flair and style, the book immortalized the past and identified the hotel as the city's greatest symbol of a bygone era. *Bonanza Inn* became an absolute sensation in a city that revered its history. The first and second printings sold out completely before the first copy was even off the press. There was a third printing within days of initial publication and a fourth in 1940. The book focused on the glory years of the old Palace, highlighting its uniqueness — the 32,000,000 bricks used in construction, the five hydraulic elevators, the 29 miles of carpets, the 9,000 polished brass cuspidors and a thousand other special features. The hotel was San Francisco's most conspicuous icon of elegance during the Gilded Age. It was the old Palace that introduced San Franciscans to a tradition of gourmet cuisine and fine dining that survives to this day. Oscar Lewis and Carroll D. Hall were honored by the hotel with a banquet for their contribution to the institution's history.

Suave, debonair Ernie Heckscher, soon to become San Francisco's most celebrated bandleader, then a recent graduate of Stanford University, played his San Francisco debut at the Palace Hotel.

October. A full size copy of the "Portals of the Past," the entrance to the old Anson N. Towne residence atop Nob Hill at the corner of California and Taylor streets was recreated by Palace artist Antonio Sotomayer to celebrate the 64th anniversary of the hotel. Sotomayer, who traditionally did artwork for the hotel, placed the mural at the entrance to The Garden Court. Carved in ice on the tables for the buffet were models of the old Palace with its open courtyard as it appeared in 1875. The dinner menu featured many of the same dishes that had made the hotel famous all over the world. Luscious breast of chicken *sous cloche* (under glass) was the *pièce de résistance*, filet mignons Sharon, Alameda garden peas and ice cream molded into miniature portals. Mrs. Clinton Wordon, née Evelyn Towne, the daughter of Anson Towne, was the guest of honor. It was her mother who in 1909 presented the façade of her home razed during the disasters of 1906 to Golden Gate Park where it was placed to adorn Lloyd Lake. Following dinner, participants adjourned for dancing in the Rose Room Bowl where Viennese waltzes, reminiscent of the romance of the 19th century again filled the room.

Dec. 7. Members of the Landmarks Council, an organization of women devoted to the preservation of the history and character of San Francisco's glamorous past chose the Palace as an appropriate venue for a luncheon highlighting the city's past. Oscar Lewis and Carroll D. Hall, authors of *Bonanza Inn* a biography of the Palace Hotel, were guests of honor.

1940 July. William W. Bradford, Executive Secretary of the Southern California Restaurant Association, wrote in the *Pacific Hotel & Restaurant Review*: “The San Francisco that I remember was like unto a glamorous woman glittering with jewels and nestled amidst pillow-like hills, a woman with all of the allure of Cleopatra and Aphrodite and yet with all the boldness of an Amazon — exciting hussy that she was. I love her, for she chose me as one of her sons. Among the many brilliant jewels which she wore so gracefully were her hotels, cafés and restaurants....What memories of the Palace Hotel revives — the century of all fashionable gatherings and gala events. No other hotel in any city in the entire world ever developed entertaining to such lavish proportions....here is the true spirit of Bohemia, good-fellowship and hospitality....I, like many another native of San Francisco, had to travel to the four corners of the earth to really appreciate my hometown.”

1941 December. Mrs. Nion (Phyllis de Young) Tucker, working with Mrs. William B. Johnstone, granddaughter of William Sharon, who was hoping to restore some of the grandeur of earlier years, helped resurrect the glamorous San Francisco Cotillion at the Palace Hotel. Maestro Ernie Heckscher and his 17-piece orchestra were hired to provide the music. Heckscher became the Cotillion’s longest standing tradition. He played every one of the annual events for 55 years until his death in 1996. The Cotillion is where the daughters of the social elect are presented to society. Heckscher noted that the presentation of the debutantes usually took about an hour. “Then we do the cotillion figures and go into the dancing immediately.” There were usually 1,500 on the dance floor.

Traditionally, the Cotillion had been staged amid the regal elegance of the Palace Hotel’s Garden Court, a room Maestro Ernie Heckscher firmly believed was the perfect venue for a girl’s debut. With its magnificent chandeliers and marble columns, the hall had higher ceilings and was more grand than any ballroom in the nation. Stated Heckscher: “When the girls make their curtsies, lighting from above contributes to an absolutely breathtaking scene.”

Girls being presented, gowned all in white, traditionally dine in the French Parlor that overlooks The Garden Court. Following dinner, girls were “herded like cattle” into two back service elevators that took them to the kitchen where, “shaking and trembling,” they were forced to stand and wait under the watchful gaze of the Cotillion committee and amused meat-caving chefs until they were introduced.

Cotillion festivities: Following long-standing tradition, high society families booked rooms and suites at the Palace wherein they entertained guests for dinner and cocktails both before and after the official festivities.

1943 March 25. Madame Chiang Kai-shek, returning to China following her meetings with President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the White House, stayed five days at the Palace Hotel in San Francisco. Madame Chiang — “Missimo” as she was referred to in the press — the regal and temperamental wife of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, arrived by train from Washington with an entourage of 40, including security personnel.

1943 March 26. “City Honors Chinese Leaders at the Most Magnificent Banquet of a Generation.” Long before the scheduled 8:30 p.m. banquet, the Palace Hotel’s Garden Court, Concert and Rose rooms were jammed to capacity. A total of 2,100 actually attended. Thousands more thronged through the lobby and corridors of the hotel hoping to see the “great lady.” The Garden Court was “ablaze” with flowers and flags. For the first time since the United States entered World War II in December 1941, formal wear for both men and women was *de rigueur*. The head table, shared with Governor and Mrs. Earl Warren and San Francisco Mayor Angelo Rossi, was covered with a red Chinese cloth and adorned with huge Chinese bowls containing red, white and blue flowers. It was set at the north end of the room. The dinner, highlighted by rare food and vintages, came to a dramatic conclusion when hotel’s head chef, carrying a tray upon which was a magnificently illuminated pagoda, followed by a parade of waiters, filed into the three banquet rooms carrying miniature pagodas on trays serving what was referred to as “*peche pagode Madame Chiang Kai-shek*” — a peach dessert created especially for her.

March 29. Nine hundred were invited and all 900 hundred attended Madame Chiang Kai-shek’s reception to say farewell to San Francisco. The venue was The Garden Court of the Palace which had received a new dressing of spring flowers. Protocol was followed to the last letter. Madame Chiang appeared shortly after 6 p.m. wearing an exquisite black satin Mandarin sheath, embroidered in pale pink plum blossoms, with which she wore a short black velvet jacket. In the crowd were many plainclothesmen, FBI and Secret Service agents.

1944 August. An injunction was brought against the Palace Hotel for raising prices in the dining room by 20 to 50 percent beyond legal limits. Fried eggplant, previously 40 cents had been raised to 60 cents. Fresh fruit in season went from 30 cents to 45 while the price of brook trout was raised from \$1 to \$1.30. A dozen other restaurants were also charged.

Oct. 3. Bon vivant writer and New York newspaper columnist Lucius Beebe checked into the Palace Hotel announcing he was planning to remain for three weeks to gather material for a new book that he tentatively titled *They Came to the Palace*. Allegedly it was to review highlights of the hotel’s history starting with its reopening in 1909 after the earthquake and fire. The book was never completed.

1945 April 25. “History Comes to San Francisco Today.” The United Nations Conference on World Organization that had been summoned by the late President Franklin Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Russia’s Premier Joseph Stalin, convened at the War Memorial Opera House (4:30 p.m.). Present were 850 delegates representing 46 countries along with thousands of members of the international press corps.

The Palace was designated as the press hotel and taken over by 2,500 reporters, photographers and broadcasters in San Francisco to report on the United Nations Conference. Syndicated New York columnist Hedda Hopper, easily identified by her chic headgear, strode into the Palace lobby (April 23) to declare: “I’m here now, all other columnists can go home.”

1945 Every cook at every hotel where delegates were berthed was checked out by State Department security personnel prior to the start of the United Nations Conference. Still, there were official “tasters” assigned to all hotel kitchens.

Much acclaimed hostess Elsa Maxwell was also in town for the United Nations conference. Besides her newspaper column, she also did a syndicated coast-to-coast network radio broadcast. Additionally, she gave parties for each of the delegations.

One typical United Nations banquet at the Palace was attended by 810 delegates. Hotel records reveal that participants consumed 257 bottles of Korbel Champagne, 1,980 mixed drinks and \$300 worth of cigarettes and cigars.

Among the many press notables at the Palace were Drew Pearson, William L. Shirer and Lowell Thomas. Walter Winchell shouted bulletins, staccato style, into the telephone. One junior journalist on his very first assignment was John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

May 15. Roast prime rib of beef, Dungeness crab legs and San Francisco Bay Shrimps along with Half Moon Bay artichokes and Green Goddess Salad were included on the menu for the banquet honoring members of the Judiciary and Bar of the United Nations.

Oct. 16. The Garden Court is the scene of a gala banquet honoring Fleet Admiral William F. “Bull” Halsey, Jr., and officers of the U.S. Third Fleet. Halsey commanded naval action in the South Pacific and Philippines area during the Second World War.

1946 *Western Hotel & Restaurant Reporter* notes: The kitchen at the Palace was one of the world’s largest. On an average day, 4,000 meals were served. During one 30-day period in 1946, kitchens at the Palace Hotel prepared 34,500 pounds of meat; 50,050 dozen eggs; 83,100 oysters; 3,590 pounds of shell fish; 7,500 pounds of fish; 20,109 pounds of poultry; 823 pounds of mushrooms. The pastry department prepared 1,400 gallons of ice cream, 26,600 pieces of pie and 20,660 pieces of French pastry.

1947 September. Prodded by hotel management, proprietors of the historic Palace tonsorial parlor severed their relationship with the hotel and moved across the street to a new location at 33 New Montgomery. Charlie Ackerland and Hazel Bradford, along with their barbers, manicurists and bootblacks vacated the hotel. In the early days, the shop boasted an elegant mug case, where steady customers kept their personal mugs, razors, combs and brushes.

Writer Lucius Beebe wrote: “Today the celebrities of a more streamline civilization, diplomats, and financiers, generals, admirals, industrialists and professional notables thunder up from the foothills of Nevada and around Cape Horn...and hasten invariably to the Palace. The Palace always stands at the end of the trail to San Francisco, and its bars and Great Court, its wonderful private apartments, restaurants and all the internal economy of a great luxury hotel are a tangible link with the legendary past of the city’s spacious and more frontier days.”

1951 Sept. 4. The peace conference officially ending the war with Japan convenes in San Francisco. Fifty-one nations, from Argentina to Vietnam, gathered in the War Memorial Opera House to welcome Japan back into the family of nations. One thousand rooms were reserved at the Fairmont, Mark Hopkins, St. Francis and the Palace hotels. The American delegation was headquartered at the Palace.

Sept. 5. The U.S. Department of State hosted a cocktail party at the Palace Hotel for delegations attending the Japanese peace conference. President Harry Truman was in attendance as was tight-lipped Soviet Foreign Minister Andre Gromyko. Diplomatically, the guests put away 1,700 bourbons, 1,500 scotches, nine gallons of Manhattans and 12 gallons of Martinis.

Sept. 7. The U.S. Department of State hosted an official state dinner for peace conference delegates in The Garden Court of the Palace Hotel.

1954 Fall. Mrs. William B. Johnstone, owner of the Palace Hotel and a descendant of William Sharon, sells the caravansary to Sheraton Hotels of America for \$6,500,000. Conrad Hilton, who had offered \$4,500,000, was outbid.

Once famed Palace Hotel menus underwent major restructuring. In an effort to shave funds from the operating budget, Oysters Kirkpatrick, a tradition on dinner menus, were “banished.” In their stead, lamb chops and string beans were added to the menu. Sheraton-Palace management declared that “it is no longer possible to maintain all the costly traditions that sentiment once dictated...our predecessors, the Sharon family, had been more intent on maintaining the traditions of the past than the vitality of the profit and loss statement.”

Under Sheraton direction, Palace Hotel rooms were redecorated. Upon completion, every room, coast to coast in Sheraton hotels, is decorated identically. *Sic transit gloria mundi!* [Thus passes the glory of the world.]

1956 Delegates of the Republican National Convention, that convened on San Francisco to re-nominate the winning ticket of Dwight Eisenhower and Richard Nixon, took over every major downtown hotel. The Sheraton-Palace was chosen to provide space for the powerful Illinois, Ohio and New York delegations.

1959 Sept. 21. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, during the deepest point of the Cold War, now playing the role of a jolly tourist, visited San Francisco. He was staying with his wife at the Mark Hopkins Hotel atop Nob Hill. Khrushchev was honored with a banquet at the Palace into which he “fast-stepped” at 7:49 p.m. Several thousand people jammed the lobby hoping to see the Soviet leader. Allegedly 3,000 were in attendance. Khrushchev spoke to a combined gathering of the Commonwealth Club and the World Affairs Council. The banquet began with a shrimp cocktail served with Russian dressing. Khrushchev spoke from a long table in the central Garden Court and television receivers carried his image and words to other crowded ballrooms in the hotel.

1960 Oct. 20. President Dwight D. Eisenhower flew to San Francisco to be greeted by the multitudes. Mayor George Christopher proclaimed October 20 “Eisenhower Day.” The crowd greeting him, estimated to have numbered 275,000, was one of the largest in the city’s history. The reason for the President’s visit was to attend a reception and dinner during which he made a major nationally televised speech to the Commonwealth Club of California in The Garden Court of the Sheraton-Palace Hotel. Sirens screaming, Eisenhower’s motorcade pulled up to the New Montgomery Street entrance for his appearance. A full platoon of San Francisco police officers held admirers back. Approximately 2,000 people crowded inside and outside the Sheraton-Palace to witness his arrival. Matrons climbed onto elegant tables, chairs and sofas in the lobby to glimpse the blue-eyed five-starred presidential hero. Patrons streamed out of two hotel bars in the effort to get a peak at Eisenhower. Attendees of the presidential dinner numbered 1,850 and another 2,000 members of the Commonwealth Club had their money returned because seats were not available. His televised address, during which he declared that it was a “debasement of the truth” that the United States was becoming a “second-class power,” was broadcasted from 9 to 9:30 p.m. The President stayed at the St. Francis Hotel.

Oct. 20. The French Parlor of the Sheraton-Palace was the scene of a gala reception and champagne party for a group of local film aficionados and foreign visitors to the San Francisco International Film Festival. It was hosted by French Consul General Didier de Fossey. This was the prelude to viewing of *The Game of Love*, France’s entry in the festival.

1965 Twentieth Anniversary of the United Nations celebrated with a banquet in The Garden Court.

1969 The Garden Court was designated San Francisco Landmark Number 18 by the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board. In the 1980s the landmark status was extended to include the entire hotel except for its southwest corner

1973 San Francisco’s Sheraton-Palace was acquired by a Japanese corporation, the Kyo - ya which, translated, means “Fun House.” This corporation retained the services of Sheraton Hotels of America to provide management.

1978 Benches for bellmen had been removed from the Palace lobby in April 1976 because management felt it would look bad if arriving guests did not see bellmen standing alertly and ready to carry luggage to the guest rooms. This decision required bellmen to stand seven hours per day. This changed in 1978, but not before the state Division of Labor Standards and the District Attorney’s office threatened to file criminal charges against the Palace. Benches were returned and bellmen were allowed to sit.

1984 The Palace became an important venue for delegates attending the Democratic National Convention. Delegates from Pennsylvania and Wyoming were headquartered at the Palace.

June 6. Despite grumbling from attorneys for the Sheraton-Palace Hotel, the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board gave landmark status to the entire hotel. This action was taken in response to plans by the Kyo-ya Corp. to build a 26-story tower addition at the corner of Jessie and Annie streets. Historically minded San Franciscans feared that the tower would overshadow the stained-glass domed roof of the landmark *Belle Époque* Garden Court dining room inside.

1989 Jan. 9. The great Renaissance-Baroque Palace closed yesterday for the first and only time since it had opened in December 1909. The last guests to check out in mid-afternoon were Mr. And Mrs. K. Milstein of Fitzroy, Australia. The Palace's general manager and vice-president, Donald Timbie, walked through the halls and declared: "It's very strange. It's very lonely."

Feb. 21. The Sheraton-Palace placed much of its past up for auction to sell off most of the old furniture, fixtures and finery that had made the Palace a landmark of style and gracious living for more than 100 years. Three hundred were present for the event. This was the first of a three-day sale. Buyers from all over the West bought paintings, library tables, chairs and other furniture. Approximately 250 items were saved for "historical reasons." Among those saved were the great crystal chandeliers that hung in The Garden Court, along with a number of large marble-top tables and a few carved pieces.

December. Tremendous disappointment swept San Francisco's high society when, because of ongoing restoration at the Palace Hotel, the famed Cotillion was staged in the San Francisco Marriott, which was just a "low, cavernous ballroom," remarked a disappointed Maestro Ernie Heckscher.

1990 December. The San Francisco Cotillion was staged at the San Francisco Hilton during the ongoing renovation of the Palace. This was scheduled during the city's coldest winter in years. "The ballroom was freezing," recalled Ernie Heckscher. Nothing seemed to work to satisfaction. "It was then how surely that we realized that The Garden Court itself was part of the longstanding Cotillion tradition."

1991 April 3. The Palace Hotel reopened for business this morning after having undergone a two-year restoration that cost owners \$150 million. The San Francisco office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill was chief architect for the project. Restoration of The Garden Court was undertaken by Page & Turnbull, specialists in historic restoration.

The Kyo-ya Corp. transformed the Palace into an up-to-date business and convention facility with 45,000 square feet of meeting and conference rooms, a swimming pool, health club and other amenities. Although strange for San Francisco, the new caravansary was fully air conditioned. The Kyo-ya people spent approximately \$300,000 per room to restore the Palace Hotel to some semblance of its original splendor.

1991 Visitors longing for opulence of the past were stunned by vistas of shining chandeliers, cool marble floor mosaics, stained-glass skylights and ornate gold-trimmed plaster facades of cherubs, violins and flowers. The renovated building offered seven stories of 550 refurbished luxury guest rooms, including 26 suites for the disabled, 19 executive suites and one presidential suite.

The restored Garden Court, according to architectural critic Allan Temko, “is not only the most resplendent room in San Francisco, but one of the largest: 120 feet long, 85 feet wide and 44 feet high from the marble paving to the oblong dome of amber and silvery glass. There are some 25,000 individual panes in the immense translucent skylight, arranged in 692 geometric panels, and every one of them has been taken down, cleaned, mended where necessary, and replaced in a rebuilt armature under a handsome new outer skylight.” One writer placed the number of pieces of stained glass in the four-story dining room’s ornamental dome at 70,000. The restored room was punctuated by ten 700-pound crystal chandeliers. On the fourth floor was a glass-domed swimming pool and health spa.

December. After several years in an alternate venue during Palace restoration, the Cotillion returned to the traditional Market Street setting. However, to the sadness of all concerned, the Palace Hotel’s owners refused to move heavy furniture and take up carpets in The Garden Court. San Francisco’s most historic society function was shunted into an adjacent ballroom.

1997 *The Game*, a motion picture, the story of a middle-aged workaholic millionaire who was given a birthday present that made him the participant of a mysterious and deadly game, was filmed, in part, in the Palace’s Garden Court. The film stars Michael Douglas.

2006 A significant role is played by the Palace in the 100th anniversary of the 1906 earthquake that had turned the 1875 caravansary into a blazing inferno. Kicking off the celebration, there was a gala dinner at the hotel. The April 17 reception began at 6 p.m. Enthusiastic participants, many in vintage costume, paid \$500 per ticket or \$1,500 for two tickets that included a dinner, an overnight stay at the hotel and a commemorative breakfast the following morning. The event was sponsored by the San Francisco Museum and Historical Society and the Chinese Historical Society of America.

2009 The Renaissance-Baroque Palace Hotel that had opened to the public in December 1909 celebrates its Centennial with a seven month long celebration “100 Years of Tradition”.