



## **THE PALACE HOTEL HISTORIC EVOLUTION**

### **The Palace Hotel 1875**

The Palace was born of dreams of William Chapman Ralston and William Sharon. Ralston, founder of the Bank of California, never saw the completion of his dream. Just before its opening, the Bank of California collapsed and the next day Ralston's body was found, presumed a suicide. On October 2, 1875, Sharon opened the Palace Hotel.

Its like had never been seen in the West. It promptly became the place to stay. Don Pedro III, Emperor of Brazil, the first reigning monarch to visit the United States, arrived in April of 1876. He is reputed to have told the Mayor of San Francisco that, "Nothing makes me ashamed of Brazil so much as The Palace Hotel".

General William T. Sherman, Civil War hero, stopped at the Palace and described it as a hostelry "which I pronounce superior to the hotels of Paris and Vienna."

Among the great who stopped at the hotel in its first 31 years of existence were: General Ulysses S. Grant, Oscar Wilde, Sarah Bernhard, Anna Held, Ignace Jan Paderewski, Lilly Langtry, Lillian Russell, Henry Ward Beecher, Presidents Harrison, McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft.

### **The Palace Hotel and the 1906 Earthquake**

Enrico Caruso was in the Palace on April 18, 1906, when the earthquake struck San Francisco.

The strength of the Palace structure proved Ralston and Sharon's foresight. Only eight percent of the Palace was damaged by the earthquake itself. To fight the onrushing flames, the Palace used hundreds of thousands of gallons of water from its own basement and roof-top reservoirs. It was only after all its own resources were used up that the Palace interior began to burn.

### **The New Palace Hotel 1909**

The razing of the old Palace (it had been decided to rebuild the hotel entirely), was begun in October 1906 and ended in May 1907 with a new Palace rising from the ashes.

The new Palace opened its doors in December 1909. Because it was rebuilt along the old lines, without omitting one endearing feature of the old Palace, the Hotel has never lost its place in the hearts of San Franciscans and world travelers. The Palace of today is a magnificent structure of steel, concrete, and brick, covering practically two acres in the heart of the city.

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Among the famed who have passed through the portals of the Palace since 1909 are: Woodrow Wilson (who gave his famous League of Nations speech in the Garden Court), President Warren G. Harding (who died while in office at the Palace on August 2, 1923), Madam Chiang Kai-Shek, Prince Olav and Princess Martha of Norway, Queen Juliana of the Netherlands, King Albert and Queen Elizabeth of Belgium, Grand Duchess Marie of Russia, Lord and Lady Mountbatten, King Alexander of Yugoslavia, Prince Philip of Great Britain, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Thomas Edison, Winston Churchill, Anthony Eden, Guglielmo Marconi, Will Rogers, Richard Byrd, Konrad Adenauer, Madame Nhu, Nikita Khrushchev and Queen Noor of Jordan.

### **The Renovation of the Palace Hotel 1989**

In January 1989, the Palace closed her doors for a major restoration. Twenty-seven months later, San Francisco witnessed the rebirth of the Palace Hotel. All areas of historic importance, including The Garden Court, were restored to their original grandeur and modern amenities such as a conference area and health spa were added to once again create a world-class hotel in San Francisco.

Commenting on the Palace April 1991 reopening, Herb Caen of the San Francisco Chronicle wrote, "The grand old place has been restored to more than its original 1909 magnificence and will definitely regain its one-time position among the world's great hotels."

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, the American Institute of Architects, the California Preservation and the California Heritage Council, among others, have all honored the Palace's restoration with a stream of design and preservation awards.

### **The Palace Hotel Today 2009**

Throughout history, the Palace has been the hotel of choice for the country's industrial titans and business leaders. The restored Palace offers 553 luxury guest rooms, 53,000 square feet of meeting space including three elegant ballrooms, a self contained conference area, full service business center, three award winning restaurants; Maxfield's, The Garden Court and Kyo-ya, health club and indoor pool.

The Palace continues its role as social arbiter to San Francisco. Held here annually are the Debutante Cotillion, numerous weddings, receptions and charity affairs.

With its original opening in 1875, the legend of the Palace Hotel began, and continued from its resurrection in 1909 after The Earthquake, and into its restoration in 1991, to once again assume the role as one of San Francisco's most cherished traditions.

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