

BUILT TO LAST

100+ Year-Old Hotels West of the Mississippi

OVERLOOKING THE GREAT GALVESTON SEA WALL AND GULF OF MEXICO.



HOTEL GALVEZ, \$1,000,000 BEACH HOTEL, ONE OF THE MANY PROMINENT FEATURES FOR WHICH GALVESTON IS NOTED

STANLEY TURKEL, CMHS

GRANDE COLONIAL HOTEL (1913)

La Jolla, California (75 rooms)



La Jolla's oldest hotel, the white wood-framed Colonial Apartments and Hotel, was designed by Richard Requa who was the master architect of the California Exposition in Balboa Park in San Diego. The hotel was described at its 1913 opening as "a perfectly appointed apartment hotel with the finest sun parlor and lobby overlooking the ocean on the Pacific coast."

George Bane, who acquired the hotel in 1920 recognized the tourist potential of La Jolla and commissioned architect Frank Stevenson to design a new hotel addition that would "rival anything in the west."

The existing building was moved to the rear of the site and a new four-story building was erected in its place. When completed in 1928, the Colonial Hotel had 28 apartments and 25 guestrooms with the first sprinkler system west of the Mississippi.

Stevenson's design was breathtaking with its sunburst design of windows and semi-circle domes of leaded glass above the French doors. The new interior included colonial fireplaces with marble hearths and ornate chandeliers. Bane said, "I've always had confidence in La Jolla and I still do. This building is the concrete expression of my faith."

La Jolla is an affluent community in San Diego, California. It is located 12 miles north of downtown San Diego and is surrounded on three sides by ocean bluffs and beaches. It is said that the local Native American tribe, the Kumeyaay's name for area was transcribed by the early Spanish settlers as La Jolla, an alternate spelling of the Spanish word "la joya" which means "the jewel". That supposed origin gave rise to the nickname "Jewel City."

In the 1890s, the San Diego, Pacific Beach and La Jolla Railway connected La Jolla to San Diego and built small cottages, a bath house and a dance pavilion. Later developments included the Scripps Institution of Oceanography (1903); La Jolla Woman's Club (1914), La Jolla Recreational Center (1915), Scripps Memorial Hospital (1924), Scripps College (1926), La Jolla Beach and Tennis Club (1927), and the University of California, San Diego (1960).

From 1917 through 1964, the U.S. Marine Corps maintained a military base in La Jolla which was known as Camp Calvin B. Matthews. When it closed in 1964, it became the campus for the University of California San Diego but only after some political soul-searching. One of the major concerns was that La Jolla had a history of restrictive housing policies, often specified in deeds and ownership documents. In La Jolla Shores and La Jolla Hermosa, only people with "pure" European ancestry could own property; this excluded Jews who were not considered pure enough. Such restrictive covenants were once fairly common throughout the United States until the 1948 Supreme Court case, *Shelley v. Kraemer* ruled them to be unenforceable. Congress outlawed them twenty years later via the Fair Housing Act of 1968. However, realtors and property owners continued to find more subtle ways of preventing or discouraging Jews from owning property there. However, over time, the prejudice was

overcome and La Jolla now has a thriving Jewish population and four synagogues.

Next door to the Colonial Hotel, the La Jolla Drugstore was purchased in 1926 by Silas O. Putnam and moved inside the Colonial's main building when it opened in 1928. Putnam added an ice cream parlor on the sidewalk which served chocolate sodas and banana splits. The pharmacist in the drugstore was the father of the famous Hollywood movie star Gregory Peck.

Post World War II, the Colonial was the temporary home to some of Hollywood's stars who performed at the La Jolla Playhouse, founded by Peck: Groucho Marx, Pat O'Brien, David Niven, Dorothy McGuire, Jane Wyatt, Charlton Heston and many more.

In 1976, three new owners acquired the Colonial for approximately \$1 million and hired architect Robert Carlisle to restore its original grandeur. The Inn received the "People in Preservation" award from the Save Our Heritage organization who said "the Colonial Inn... brings the very best from La Jolla's past tastefully into the present. Elegance, continental service, graceful design and décor, all embraced in the ambiance of a small European hotel."

In 1980, the Putnam's drugstore was converted to a new restaurant, called Putnam's Grille. The original soda fountain was replaced with a mirrored-back bar. The restaurant reflected its heritage by providing sidewalk seating, continuing the tradition of 65 years.

In 1988, the Colonial Inn was sold for \$13.85 million to the Japanese-based investment firm Tokyo Masniwaya California. Then, in July 1998, Franklin Croft LLC and Fargo Hotel Investors LLC purchased the hotel and installed Terry Underwood as general manager to oversee a \$5 million renovation. In 2001, Putnam's Grille was replaced by the Nine-Ten Restaurant which has won a "extraordinary to perfection" rating from ZAGAT as well as San Diego Magazine's "Best Hotel Restaurant" and "Best American Restaurant"; the California Restaurant Association's "Best Hotel Restaurant"; Gayot's "Top 10 Gastronomy

Cuisine Restaurants in the U.S.”; Wine Spectator’s “Award of Excellence”; and a rave notice as “one of the year’s most exciting discoveries” by the *Los Angeles Times*.

A major \$8 million restoration project in 2007 included renovation of the existing 75 guestrooms. The project also included the preservations of two adjacent historic landmarks: the Little Hotel by the Sea (1924) and the Garden Terraces (1926), adding 18 new suites, all with kitchenettes and some with fireplaces. These projects included the restoration of the rooftop deck and the 1929 Baker & Sons elevator, thereby gaining designation as “The Smallest Hotel in the World with an Elevator.”

On February 1, 2013, the Grande Colonial celebrated its 100th anniversary with an historic video montage and history booklet, and a time capsule buried beneath the hotel to be opened on February 1, 2113.

Sources:

- Grande Colonial La Jolla History; The Grande Colonial Frommer’s Review; “Uncovering The Grande Colonial’s Haunted History” by Lauren Ventura, sdnews.com, San Diego Community Newspaper Group
- La Jolla, Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
- Mary Ellen Stratthaus, “Flaw in the Jewel: Housing Discrimination Against Jews in La Jolla, California”, American Jewish Historical Society, July 1, 2010

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"Built To Last: 100+ Year-Old Hotels West of the Mississippi" is a sequel to my 2013 book *"Built To Last: 100+ Year-Old Hotels East of the Mississippi"*. It has 60 chapters, one for each century-old hotel (of 50 rooms or more) west of the Mississippi River. Each chapter is illustrated with an antique postcard. The Foreword was written by Ian Schrager who wrote:

"I have known Stanley for many years. He is as curious and passionate today as he was when I first met him 25 years ago. He is a true student of the world of hotels and offers wisdom and insight at every turn. These books are not only history of 178 hotels, they are the history of our country and us as a people. They are truly enlightening.

I sincerely feel that every hotel and every hotel school should own sets of these books and make them required reading for their students and employees."

Ian Schrager

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