

# Historic Hotels!

## II: San Francisco's *St. Francis*

For those of us in Northern California, San Francisco's St. Francis Hotel is certainly a familiar name...and a familiar landmark. For myself, the name always hits home not only because I've been there several times over the years, but, in my younger days, I took some dates there, and one year I spent the summer working just down the street.

In the heart of the city on Union Square, The Westin St. Francis has been the center of the city's cultural and social life since it opened in in 1904 The hotel on Union Square had been opened a short time before San Francisco's famous earthquake and fire. Fortunately, even with widespread destruction in other parts of the city, the hotel did not suffer structural loss, as beams and girders in the basement and first floor were coated with concrete. The fire did little damage, as well.

As part of a \$55 million restoration project, The Westin St. Francis has added new furniture, wall coverings and carpeting to all of its historic main buildings. The additions complement the 1992 restoration of the hotel's Powell Street and Tower lobbies. Tower rooms have also been redecorated, and guests can now enjoy in-room safes, hairdryers, as well as state-of-the-art safety upgrades, including new room key cards. The St. Francis continues to enjoy the spotlight as San Francisco's perennial showplace.

The St. Francis, a landmark in the City by the Bay since 1904, is worth a visit, if you happen to be in the area, just to sit in the exceptional rosewood-paneled lobby and to enjoy champagne and caviar and a slow turn around the dance floor of the lush and clubby Compass Rose Bar. For those lighter afoot, Oz, at the hotel's top, offers more up-beat dancing into the wee hours.

All rooms were recently renovated and are attractively furnished and well-equipped with such modern amenities as minibars, refrigerators, and bathroom telephones. A 32 -floor tower with outside glass-enclosed elevators was added some years ago. The hotel has 1200 rooms.

Well, not surprisingly, then, with such a famous 96-year old hotel, there have been a number of covers issued over the years. I'm not a Hotel collector, so I can't give you exact numbers and types, but I have several, just in my collections of peripheral topics.

