

# Historic Hotels!

## V: Palm Beach's *The Breakers*

After accumulating a great fortune through a partnership with John D. Rockefeller in Standard Oil, today EXXON, Henry Morrison Flagler turned his attention to Florida in 1883. Impressed with the mild winter climate, he began the construction of his first hotel in the Palm Beach area. Until his death in 1913, Flagler established along the east coast of Florida an extraordinary legacy of which The Breakers is a monumental part.

- **1893** Henry Morrison Flagler purchases 140 acres between the Atlantic Ocean and Lake Worth.
- **1896** Flagler enlarges a winter home which stood on the 140 acres he purchased in 1893 forming the Palm Beach Inn, an overflow property to the Royal Poinciana. The beautiful inn becomes the only oceanfront hotel south of Daytona Beach.
- **1897** To accommodate golfers at The Palm Beach Inn and Royal Poinciana, Flagler contracts Alexander J. Findlay to build the first 9 holes of golf in Florida.
- **1901** As guests begin to request a room "down by the breakers," The Palm Beach Inn is renamed The Breakers.
- **1903** While again being enlarged, The Breakers catches fire and burns to the ground on June 10. It was immediately replaced by a more attractive wooden structure and was accepted as one of the finest hotels in America. Flagler extended his railroad to the front of the hotel for convenience. Tracks remained next to the circular driveway of The Breakers until the late 1920s.



- **1925** The "second" Breakers burns on March 18. The fire was said to have been started by one of those "new fangled hair curling irons."
- **1926** As a tribute to the vision of Henry Flagler, The Flagler heirs build the current Breakers, one of the finest resorts in the world, at a cost of \$6 million.
- **1944** The Breakers becomes a Ream Army General Hospital during World War II, visited by such prominent people as Eleanor Roosevelt and President Harry Truman.
- **1968** The east wings consisting of 150 guest rooms, are added to The Breakers in addition to the grand Venetian Ballroom.
- **1971** The Breakers, originally open mid-December to mid-April, opens to guests year-round.



- **1996** The Breakers celebrates a "Century of Grand Traditions" with the completion of a \$75 million renovation.
  - **1997** Centennial of The Breakers Ocean Front Golf Course.
  - **1998** The Spa at The Breakers opens.
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