

Historic Hotels!

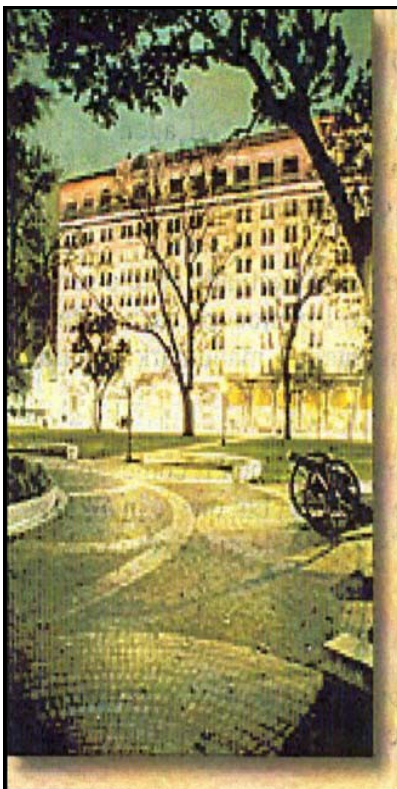
VI: San Antonio's *St. Anthony Hotel*

San Antonio, Texas was not much more than a small cow town back in 1909, when three ambitious Texans decided to build a first-class hotel. These men, F.M. Swearingen, former manager of the Hot Wells Hotel, along with two successful cattlemen, B.L. Naylor and A.H. Jones, had been watching Houston and Dallas develop into major commercial centers. They dreamed of a similar direction for San Antonio and were convinced that because of the city's rich history diverse culture, charming architecture, and numerous attractions, a distinguished hotel was all that the city needed in order to progress.

They began with \$100,000 and, mindful of the city's rich history, they carefully selected the name, the St. Anthony Hotel. Within the same year construction began on an eight story annex or east tower. When completed the hotel contained 430 richly furnished rooms and five restaurants. One visitor from St. Louis described the St. Anthony as being in the same class as the Waldorf-Astoria in New York City.

In 1935, in the midst of some of the worst economic times ever experienced in San Antonio, the St. Anthony was purchased by entrepreneur Ralph W. Morrison. The Morrison family remained in control of the hotel until 1971. During these 36 years the hotel went through dramatic changes. Between 1935 and 1941, Morrison added the final 10-story tower of guest rooms installed the air conditioning (the first hotel in the world), electric-eye entrance doors, and a drive-in garage registration facility, as well as the first auto lobby.

During this time Peacock Alley was added and Morrison began acquiring the hotel's vast collection of French Empire antiques, original paintings, tapestries and bronze figures.



Since first opening its doors in 1909, the historic St. Anthony has played host to princes and presidents, and to celebrities from the worlds of music, theater and film. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt visited Peacock Alley, as did President Eisenhower, General Douglas McArthur, and Prince Ranier and Princess Grace of Monaco. Many guests from Hollywood's "Golden Era" enjoyed the style and luxury offered at the St. Anthony: Judy Garland, Mickey Rooney, Lucille Ball Fred Astaire, Betty Hutton, Greer Garson, Lyndon Johnson, John Wayne, Gregory Peck, and Rock Hudson. Recent celebrities registered at the St. Anthony have included; Arnold Schwarzenegger and Maria Shriver, Patrick Swayze, George Clooney, Demi Moore, Bruce Willis, and Matthew McConaughey. A Planet Hollywood opened there in 1996.

