

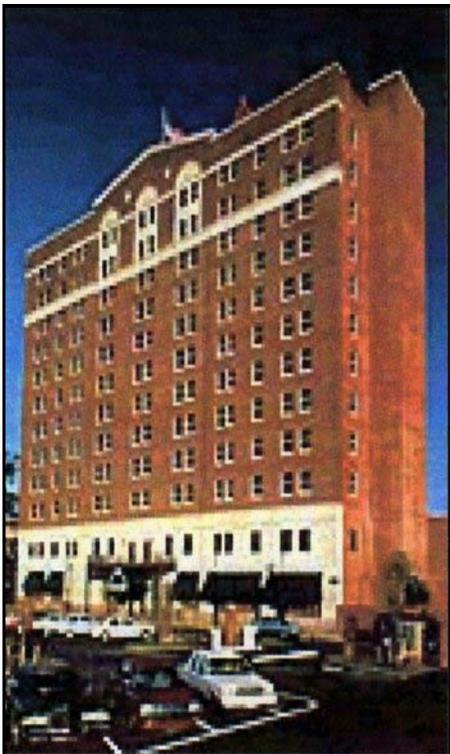
Historic Hotels!

XVIII: Mobile's *Admiral Semmes Hotel*

[You know, I've never been a Hotel collector, myself, but going through these Historic Hotels every month, and doing the research to come up with the appropriate information to present to you, certainly brings to my mind the many ways in which such hotels have been, and are, an integral part of American life...so many of them have long and distinguished histories, so many memories are attached to them, famous things happened in them, famous people attended them, famous things are shown in them...classic architecture, dramatic political campaigns, assassinations, remembered speeches, the debut of great careers, the conclusion of great careers, and so much more...]

Just look at this one, for example. A Mobile, Alabama landmark since its opening in 1940, this hotel is still, today, a most inviting Gulf Coast destination for travelers. The Admiral Semmes, currently boasting a life of some 62 years, is named for Raphael Semmes, a lawyer, writer and editor, and one of the state's most distinguished figures, but he's best remembered as the first and only commander of the Confederate ship, *Alabama*, which sank off the coast of France after battling the *USS Kearsarge* in 1864.

Closed due to damage from Hurricane Frederic in 1979, the hotel was beautifully renovated in 1985. The exterior, typical of the restrained architectural styles commonly found at the end of the Depression, is contrasted by surprising interior flourishes including the lobby's expansive marble floor and curving stairs, a unique oval balconied lobby highlighted by a large central chandelier, mirrored walls in the mezzanine, and the original Art Deco elevator doors....all of which, of course, would be immediately apparent to any and all architects...to you and me, it all just translates into a stunningly attractive interior!



This Alabama hotel has recently been placed on the list of Historic Hotels of America, a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. And, in fact, it is the first hotel in Mobile to be invited to join this association - one based on historical character, architectural quality and the outstanding preservation efforts made by owners and managers who are dedicated to maintaining the hotel's historic integrity.

As with so many of the surviving great hotels, The Admiral Semmes Hotel is now part of a larger world-wide modern chain, in this case... Radisson. And perhaps that's at least part of the secret of such hotels escaping the wrecking ball that's taken away so many others.

