

Historic Hotels!

XVII: Charleston's *Hotel Kanawha*

Another great, old hotel...yet, if we weren't aware of its history, how many of us would just pass it right on by as we walk down the street, oblivious to its importance, unaware of its standing in the community and perhaps even its import to the country as a whole. Granted, for some issues here, one would have to be an architect to appreciate the finer points of the structure and lines of such buildings, but almost all of us can appreciate commonalities such as age, prominence in important events of the past, and so on. We just need to be made aware that they exist.....and isn't that true about so many things in life?! *[This moment of reflection brought to you by Sierra-Diablo Matchcover Club: its officers, members and worldwide subsidiaries]*

Our featured Historic Hotel of the month is a good case in point. Looking at the picture of the building itself on the matchcover pictured below, few of us would give its features more than a cursory glance. "Looks like your ordinary, old building," one might say. From an architectural view, however, its features veritably leap to the eye! The Hotel Kanawha was designed by architects Rabenstein & Warne, and its design elements include style elements of Victorian Romanesque and Second Empire detailing, making it deserving of note, so the experts say. Too academic for us, probably, but it's probably worth remembering that whatever we happen to see on the surface is normally not all there is to see in most things in life. *[Oh, a second deep, reflective moment...and all this, my friends, at no additional charge]*

Well, how about something that we masses can identify with? It's here, of course, or we wouldn't be spotlighting the venerable Hotel Kanawha in the first place. Located at the corner of Virginia and Summers, this was, in fact, one of Charleston's premiere hotels and meeting places for over fifty years. A central gathering place for the state's wealthy and influential movers and shakers, as well as the city's, the hotel was on the cutting edge of the community's social and political scenes.

A postcard from the Kanawha Hotel c. 1910



And, it went even further, since the hotel also served as the 1960 presidential campaign headquarters of John F. Kennedy, who of course, won the election and went on to become one of America's most beloved presidents.. and it all started in Charleston's stately, yet little-known, Hotel Kanawha.

