

Historic Hotels!

XXII: San Diego's *Hotel del Coronado*

[Yes, I know it's in Coronado!] Well, here's one of the few Historic Hotels I've actually been too. Years ago, I traveled all the way down to the Hotel del Coronado from Sacramento to give a paper at an Anthropology conference being held there. It was a very impressive site...and then there's that lake or whatever right next to it...what was it? Oh, yes...the Pacific Ocean.

It's quite a complex, and it started with a dream. In 1888, the picturesque Coronado peninsula - surrounded by water on three sides and just a stone's throw from the developing city of San Diego - showed its promise to Elisha Babcock and H.L. Story, who dreamed of building a hotel which they envisioned would be "the talk of the western world." Renowned for its magnificent architecture, the Hotel del Coronado is equally well known for its legendary guests. Ten United States presidents have stayed at the resort, starting with Benjamin Harrison in 1891. In fact, Lyndon Johnson and every president since have visited The Del.

Legendary admirers of The Del include American aviator Charles Lindbergh who was honored at the hotel after his successful 1927 transatlantic flight [no covers from that one, unfortunately!]. And frequent guest L. Frank Baum, the author of the Wizard of Oz series, is credited with designing the beautiful crown chandeliers in the Crown Room. In 1920, England's Prince of Wales visited The Del. At that time, his future wife, Wallis Spencer Simpson, was living in Coronado. Ever since then, people have wondered if the two may have met for the first time during Prince Edward's 1920 visit. Sixteen years later, Edward would give up the throne to marry the divorced Mrs. Simpson.

With its proximity to Los Angeles, the Hotel del Coronado has attracted movie stars since 1901, when the first film was made in Coronado. In 1958, *Some Like It Hot* was filmed at The Del, starring Marilyn Monroe, Jack Lemmon and Tony Curtis. Although the resort has hosted many visitors over the years, there is one guest - Kate Morgan - who some say has been here since 1892. In November 1892, Kate checked into the hotel - broken-hearted and alone. Five days later, she was found dead on the beach, a gunshot wound to her head. Apparently, Kate had killed herself after a quarrel with her estranged husband. Since that time, resort guests, associates, and even paranormal researchers have attested to the fact that Kate's former room is haunted by her spirit.

