

Hotel Swastika

There were actually a number of ‘Swastika’-named hotels, lodges, etc. around the country at one time. Here, we’re concerned with the Hotel Swastika in Raton, NM. It opened in June 1929, and the name ‘Swastika’ was chosen because it was a symbol commonly used in the area by many of the local Native American Indian tribes. There were many businesses in the Raton area that also used the Swastika symbol and name in their corporate logo and masthead. The hotel operated for ten years as the Hotel Swastika until it changed its name to Hotel Yucca in 1939.

Raton was then a major crossroad with three main U.S. highways bisecting the city and was on the main route of the Santa Fe Railroad. When the hotel opened, it had six floors and 80 guest rooms. The ground floor held several businesses that paid rent to the hotel. On Raton resident described the building as “very elegant” and the best hotel between Santa Fe and Colorado Springs. An article in the *Raton Range* newspaper noted that Taos artists consigned some of their artwork in the hotel. Interested patrons could purchase the paintings, and this kept a steady supply of nice artwork on exhibit in the hotel

By 1938, the actions of Adolf Hitler had alarmed enough people that the Swastika symbol took on an entirely different meaning. The hotel manager at the time, Ainslee Embree, said that potential guests refused to stay at the hotel because of the negative connotations now associated with the Swastika. A contest was held, and “Yucca” was chosen in honor of the New Mexico state flower.

Thirty years later, with the influx of motels, inns, and lodges serving the interstate highway travelers, the Hotel Yucca finally closed its doors in 1969. In 1971, the building was converted to a bank. Today, the building still looks nice and has been kept up well as a bank. [Thanks to Duane Ready, PA, for this]

