

# City Beat

*There are eight million stories in my albums. This is one of them...*

The Blackstone Hotel is a historic 290-foot , 21-story hotel located on the corner of Michigan Avenue and Balbo Drive in the Michigan Boulevard Historic District in the Loop community area of Chicago, Illinois. The Blackstone is famous for hosting celebrity guests, including numerous U.S. presidents, for which it was known as the "Hotel of Presidents" for much of the 20th century, and for contributing the term "smoke-filled room" to political parlance.

The hotel was named for Timothy Blackstone, a notable Chicago business executive and politician, who served as the founding president of the Union Stock Yards, president of the Chicago and Alton Railroad, and mayor of La Salle, Illinois. It was built from 1908 to 1910 and designed by Marshall and Fox. The original construction was capitalized at \$1.5 million (\$28.5 million today), including a \$600,000 to \$750,000 bond issue by the Drake Hotel Company. In the 1920s, the Drake Hotel Company undertook some financing arrangements which included extending their debt to construct the Drake Hotel. They used the Blackstone Hotel as collateral for one loan in 1927. The Wall Street Crash of 1929 rippled into the hotel industry, leaving the Chicago Title and Trust Company with 30 Chicago hotels in receivership and causing the Drakes to default in 1932. The hotel ended up belonging to Metropolitan Life, which held the mortgage. MetLife leased the Blackstone to hotelier Arnold Kirkeby in 1936, and Kirkeby bought the hotel outright in 1941. Kirkeby sold the hotel to Sheraton Hotels in 1954 and it was renamed the Sheraton-Blackstone Hotel.

The hotel endured troubles in the late 1960s, as the neighborhood surrounding it declined, and Sheraton finally sold the property to local hotelier Mark Friedman on September 12, 1973, for \$5 million, and the hotel became the Blackstone Hotel again. In 1995, the Blackstone was sold to the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.

On May 29, 1998, the Blackstone Hotel was designated as a Chicago Landmark. The hotel was added to the National Register of Historic Places on May 8, 1986. It is also a historic district contributing property for the Chicago Landmark Historic Michigan Boulevard District.

The hotel closed in 2000 after Occupational Safety and Health Administration building inspectors found safety problems during a 1999 inspection. The building's owner, Heaven on Earth Inns Corp, run by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, sold the property to Rubloff, Inc. In 2005, it was announced that the hotel would undergo a \$112 million renovation and acquisition with a planned opening in 2007 in a deal between Marriott International/Renaissance Hotels and Sage Hospitality, a Denver, Colorado-based company.

On June 7, 2017, The Blackstone was transferred from Marriott's Renaissance Hotels division to their Autograph Hotels division and returned to its historic name, The Blackstone Hotel. The transition included a renovation to update the look of the hotel with a historic meets contemporary feel by revitalizing the soft good of the guest rooms, meeting spaces and lobby. The hotel also opened a bar in the lobby called Timothy's Hutch, paying homage to the hotel's namesake, Timothy Blackstone. [[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Blackstone\\_Hotel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Blackstone_Hotel)]

