

The Grand Lady of 4th Avenue, the Multnomah Hotel, was built in 1912 and would remain the largest rooms per guest hotel in Portland until 1963 when its doors closed. It was the first hotel on the West Coast to offer Room Service and centralized air conditioning (1912) and was the first in the country to offer drive-up automated check-in (1956).



On opening day in 1912, general manager, Philip Gevurtz, unlocked the front doors with a hand-made hotel key and then went to the roof where he quietly “sent the golden key aloft with many balloons.” The key has not been seen since. Later that day, Mrs. Yates, wife of the owner and creator, christened the hotel by smashing a bottle of wine on the marble lobby floor.



Under scandal but “no fear of rebuke” the Hotel had the first (and only until the mid-1920’s) Ladies Smoking Tea Room, named the Bamboo Room, decorated as an oasis equal to the grandeur the Men’s Smoking Room across the lobby.



Over 8,000 visitors flocked to the grand opening on the first day in April 1912 and 1,200 people dined in one of the nine banquet halls, dining rooms and grills. It was such a popular opening the Hotel kept the same menu for one week so everyone who wanted to was able to enjoy the grand fare.



The most significant impression left from over 100 years of the Multnomah Hotel's history are the etched marks on the 26 marble columns in the lobby made by the Bellhop cufflinks and bell carts. They stood hours upon hours at each grand pillar waiting to assist guests and marked the columns to avoid the monotony of daily work.

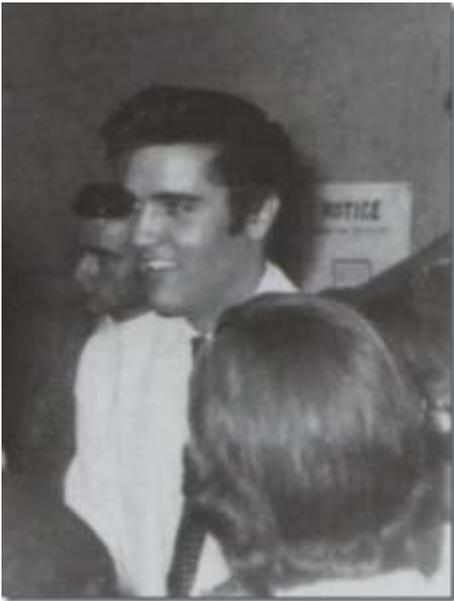


The Multnomah Hotel has hosted many famous performers including Frank Sinatra (“He was always a bit mad and never smiled” said Hans Rampmeier, head waiter), Bob Hope (“Always cracking jokes”), Bing Crosby (“Always ordered milk and chicken sandwiches”), Lana Turner (“She was very pregnant”), The Lennon Sisters (“Had their breakfast in bed on a tray”), Skitch Henderson (who performed in the lobby restaurant Stirrup Room), Ethel Waters (who sang to the elevator girls to warm up before her show), Margaret Whiting and Jack Benny hosting his annual Symphony Ball at the hotel.

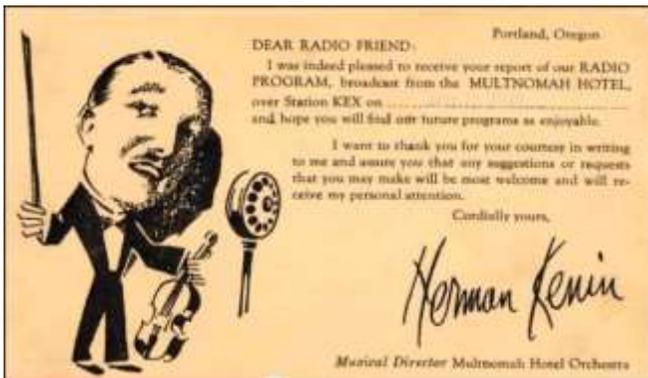


Historical Photograph Collections, Washington State University Libraries
Photo of Joan Crawford autographed for Hans Rampmeier

The biggest star the hotel hosted was Elvis Presley when he performed at Civic Stadium (now called Providence Park) in 1957. He and his entourage had entire seventh floor reserved for the night and had a private dinner in the Governor’s Suite (now the Presidential Suite) on the eighth floor after the show and as a thank you, staff was treated to photos and autographs from “The King” during his whirlwind night.



In-house performers kept the guests returning year after year, such as Herman Kenin and his Multnomah Hotel Orchestra Band, performing nightly in the ballrooms and Garden Room billed as “The Pride of the Coast” for over five years. They could be heard live on Sunday’s radio station throughout the greater Portland area and were signed by Victor Records in the mid 1920’s. In 1927 and 1929 they recorded “Live from the Tea Room at the Multnomah Hotel” records which were released to the public.



The Arcadian Garden Room held the first and longest running vaudeville acts on the west coast beginning in 1912 and the lobby has been graced with such talent as Joan Crawford, Mary Pickford, Clark Gable, Rudolph Valentino, and Peter Lorre. Westerns were big in the 1960’s for stars such as Clint Walker, Richard Boone, and Hugh O’Brian all of whom called us home while filming in Eastern Oregon.



The biggest star-studded event was in 1952 when the cast and crew of “The Bend of the River” stayed at the Multnomah Hotel with full fanfare and parades lead by Jimmy Stewart.



The Multnomah Hotel was the only hotel in Portland approved by Secret Service for political travel until 1963 when the hotel closed therefore every politician who visited the Rose City either for campaign tours or publicity appearances would stop here. Before or after they were presidents, Teddy Roosevelt, Harding, Hoover, Franklin Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon all stepped through the front doors as well as some of their rivals such as Thomas Dewey, Harold Stassen, Adlai Stevenson, Hubert Humphrey, Henry Cabot Lodge and Barry Goldwater.



(need to scan this photo again)

Generals from around the world have called upon our service as well including Army Joint Chief of Staff General Leonard Wood in 1912, French Marshalls Foch, Petain and Joffre after World War I, and many more.

President Eisenhower was the only sitting president to spend the night (in 1956) at the Multnomah Hotel and, much like Elvis' visit the year after, the entire seventh floor was reserved and redecorated for the presidential party. Junior Waiter Bruno Esimada, was one of only 125 survivors from the US Navy destroyer USS Calhoun which sunk in Okinawa and he was the only hotel employee allowed to the President's room to serve him. Two years later while JFK was on a campaign tour, he met his brother Bobby at the hotel who was in town for the Racketeering Hearings with Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren.



Up, Up and Away

Lucky Lindy



Christofferson

Royalty Amongst Us

Queen Marie

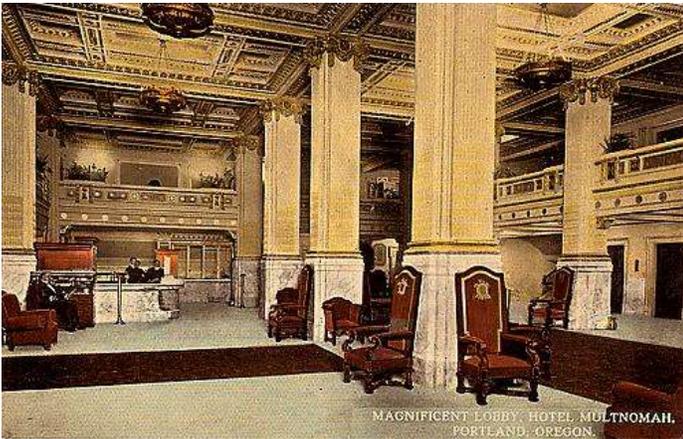


Poker Jim



Extra NOTES:

The shoe shine shop handmade personalized wooden shoes for guests while they stayed in the hotel as well as shined shoes



The 26 columns were re-painted in 1931 with “modernistic style with 16 colors”.



Held the title of having the largest neon sign on its rooftop of 39 feet high by 156 feet in length with letters eight feet in height until Times Square in New York broke the record.



The Arcadian Garden Room was used as the Fallout Shelter for the city during World War II.



Fred Astaire (**Rudolph Valentino?**) stayed here while teaching ballroom dance classes at Crystal Ballroom (whose dance floor he loved more than any other due to the ball bearings in the floor).