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CELEBRITIES AND CELEBRATIONS MARK THE TALE OF “A TEXAS JEWEL REBORN”

The Colorful History of The St. Anthony, a Luxury Collection Hotel, San Antonio,

SAN ANTONIO (2016) – From the time it opened as San Antonio’s first true luxury hotel in 1909, The St. Anthony, a Luxury Collection Hotel, San Antonio, has set trends, hosted celebrities and thrown celebrations that have left an indelible mark on the city. As it marks its re-opening and the “Queen of San Antonio” again assumes her crown, a peek into some of the hotel’s storied past leaves little doubt as to why the hotel has such a special place in the heart of anyone who has enjoyed a stay.

Historically Modern: Filled with Firsts

Being the first luxury hotel in San Antonio wasn’t a laurel The St. Anthony took lightly. Not even open a year, the hotel’s original owners engaged an architect to design a second eight-story tower, expanding The St. Anthony to a richly furnished, 430-room hotel boasting mahogany furniture and fine tapestries. But expansion wasn’t the only way the hotel made its mark. After the hotel was sold to Ralph Morrison in 1935, a 1936 renovation installed air conditioning, making The St. Anthony the first fully-functioning air conditioned hotel in the world.

Determined to make The St. Anthony into an even classier hotel, Morrison also installed a “magic eye” door that opened automatically as people approached. Installed in early 1936, it was the first such door of its kind in any building in Texas.

Another hotel world first: a drive-in auto lobby. When the St. Anthony first opened its doors, horsepower meant horse and buggy, not engine, but as the automobile gained prominence, the hotel evolved with the times. In the 1930s and 40s, cars weren’t air conditioned and a road trip wasn’t always pleasant: guests often arrived hot and disheveled—not what the hotel’s famous Peacock Alley was expecting to see. So Morrison devised a drive-through registration desk at the motor lobby entrance to the new garage in the third wing, added to the hotel in 1941. Visitors could drive up, sign in and use a private elevator to go to their rooms to freshen up before returning to Peacock Alley.

The motor lobby also featured four gas pumps so attendants could fill up the cars and charge it the guests’ room bills, making it convenient for guests when they were ready to use their car again. And thanks to a pneumatic tube delivery system, guests who checked in via the motor lobby never needed to visit the front desk: their registrations were delivered there via pneumatic tube, keeping the front desk registry up-to-speed with the motor registrations.

“Dusting Off A Legend”

The tales behind of The St. Anthony could fill a book—and in fact they do: “Dusting Off A Legend: The St. Anthony Hotel” tells the colorful history of The St. Anthony, recounting the hotel’s milestones during its more than 100 years as the “Queen of San Antonio”. The book shares first-hand accounts of the hotel’s history from notable San Antonians, celebrities, employees, and hotel guests as well as striking photographs and details of the hotel’s past.

Author Gaylon Finklea Hecker, a lifetime print journalist known for her historical works about San Antonio’s unique past, spent weeks in the hotel’s Lincoln Suite, researching the hotel’s long-forgotten archives and conducting one-on-one interviews to glean historic details and memories from noted San Antonians and hotel employees.

The book, which is displayed in each of the hotel’s 277 guestrooms and suites, is \$50 and is available for purchase at the hotel’s front desk during the final touches of the renovation and will be available for purchase in The St. Anthony gift shop when it reopens late fall 2015

Hosting Celebrities, Princesses, Politicians and Newsmakers

The St. Anthony's elegance and excellent reputation were well-known by the thousands of guests who enjoyed its sophistication from its earliest days. From true royalty to Hollywood royalty, the "Queen of San Antonio" has hosted stars and starlets, sports greats and comedians—and every governor of Texas since 1909—as well as presidents, politicians and business leaders. The list of newsmakers and notables visiting The St. Anthony includes everyone from Princess Grace and Prince Ranier, Monaco's beloved royal couple, who attended a 700-person gala in the hotel during HemisFair '68 to Presidents Lyndon B. Johnson and George H.W. Bush, as well as 'King of the Cowboys' Roy Rogers, who stayed at the hotel with his wife Dale Evans when the cowboy couple appeared at the local rodeo in 1955.

Many of these extraordinary guests were asked to sign a special guestbook for the hotel and they often included comments and compliments about their stay. Flipping through the pages of the book, which is kept in The St. Anthony archives, is like looking through a "Who's Who." Hollywood legend Cary Grant noted "A happy stay!" in 1985, while Texas Governor Dolph Briscoe wrote "Always the greatest among the great hotels of the world." Actor Michael J. Fox commented "Beautiful room, beautiful people. Gracias." and legendary sports commentator Howard Cosell said "I love your hotel and I love your city—great to be back."

Western idol John Wayne's signature in the book notes "A great hotel! Wonderful people!" from his stay during the world premiere of "The Alamo" in 1960. James T. "Happy" Shahan, known as the father of Texas filmmaking and the owner of the ranch that housed the set for the 1960 film, recounted to friends that he and John Wayne were at The St. Anthony for a convention and in a hurry to go across town to an event. A hotel employee came to the door and warned them that the word had gotten out and a crowd had gathered in the lobby to meet John Wayne as he came through. Wayne and asked if there was any other way they could get out without using the elevator or stairs to the lobby and the employee suggested the laundry chute. Legend has it that Wayne and Shahan slid down the laundry chute and made their getaway. Wayne visited so often and was so popular that in 1978 the hotel named a suite after him. Refreshed and updated to match the hotel's renovation, the suite can still be rented today.

From Al Jolson to Goldie Hawn, Olivia de Havilland to Edgar Bergen, Ricardo Montalban to Joel McCrea, famous visitors added their star power to San Antonio's star hotel. Other famous guests include baseball great Yogi Berra; Fred Astair's favorite dance partner, Ginger Rogers, who stayed in the hotel in 1942 during her whirlwind tour selling war bonds; evangelist Billy Graham and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, as well as George Clooney, Jack Benny, Victor Fleming, Gloria Vanderbilt, Clara Bow, Gary Cooper and Jane Russell.

Exceptional Entertainment

The hotel's list of notable guests includes a musical note as well: everyone from opera star Beverly Sills to rock stars ZZ Top has stayed at The St. Anthony, signing the special guest book along with Linda Ronstadt, Crystal Gayle, Tanya Tucker, Doc Severinsen, Dave Brubeck, The Temptations, Liza Minnelli and Guy Lombardo—who also entertained at The St. Anthony Club in 1965. But while many stars have walked the hotel's refined lobby, the famed Peacock Alley, the true star of the show has always been the exquisite Hamburg Steinway concert grand piano ensconced in Peacock Alley by owner Ralph W. Morrison after he purchased the hotel in 1935.

The Russian government ordered the custom-made grand piano from Steinway New York in 1924 for the Russian Embassy in Paris. Decorated with a rosewood case with tulip wood inlay, marquetry inlay and gilt bronze mounts, the piano features ormolu medallions as well. Eventually, the Russians moved the piano to their Washington, D.C., embassy. From there, it was sold in the late 1930s to Ralph Morrison, who was traveling the world collecting art pieces to display in the hotel. The selling price was \$27,000, the equivalent of more than \$440,000 in 2013 dollars. While the exact date of Morrison's purchase is unknown, pictures in Peacock Alley feature the piano as early as 1937.

A little known fact: the piano was actually once a player piano, but the player mechanism was removed before it became part of The St. Anthony. For decades, the piano and a procession of renowned pianists drew San Antonians and guests alike to the lobby for quiet, sophisticated weekday afternoon performances by a quartet of piano, string bass and violins. In 1993, however, the cherished music stopped when the piano

was “spirited away” to the California home of the owner and chairman of Park Lane Hotels, then The St. Anthony’s owner.

In 2013, the Steinway was offered through a worldwide fine arts auction house. The piano was valued between \$60,000 and \$80,000. However, the selling price rose to \$220,000 after only a minute-and-a-half bidding session conducted over the phone. The piano required much repair before it could return to its treasured location in Peacock Alley, so it was shipped to Steinway, its creator, in New York. Falling under the spell of the piano and its unique story—and proud of its good work on the legendary piece—when the repairs were complete, Steinway threw a party to give the piano a stylish sendoff back to San Antonio, where the stately piano will once again provide beautiful music for hotel guests.

San Antonio Royalty: Fiesta Pomp and Circumstance

By 1909 when The St. Anthony opened, Fiesta, San Antonio’s annual springtime celebration, was in full force, but the hotel quickly became an integral part of the merry making that marks the Texians’ victory at the Battle of San Jacinto and the coming of spring. The glorious array of events known as Fiesta demanded extraordinary effort and organization, so in 1909 John Carrington founded the Order of the Alamo, one of the oldest Fiesta organizations. The members meet once a year to choose the next year’s queen and her court, which includes a princess, 12 in-town duchesses and 12 duchesses from out of town.

From the earliest days, The St. Anthony played a serious role in Fiesta, serving as host to a reception for the queen and her court following their traditional coronation ceremony. Families, guests and the royal court, accompanied by their escorts, could get an up close look at the stunning gowns. While the event rotates to other hotels as well, hosting the queen’s reception in the Anacacho Room remains a highlight of The St. Anthony’s year.

Over the early years Fiesta royalty has included King Cotton, King Selamat (tamales spelled backwards), King Omala (Alamo spelled backwards) and King Antonio. By 1926, John Carrington formed the Texas Cavaliers, a new male organization, and one of the purposes of the organization was to select King Antonio. The King’s Ball, the most lavish affair given by the Cavaliers, has been held at all major San Antonio hotels, but for years was hosted by The St. Anthony. And by 1971, the group had established its “hospitality room” in the hotel’s Cavalier Room. A King’s Room had been at the hotel as early as the 1930s, and the king’s portraits were hung there. The portraits now hang in the Cavalier Room at The St. Anthony, a room not reserved exclusively for Cavalier functions, but a place of honor for the Cavaliers and a true glimpse of Cavaliers’ rich history.

Camaraderie, Business and Making History: The St. Anthony Club

When The St. Anthony’s owners decided in 1959 to create a private club whose members could buy liquor by the drink in a classy setting, little could they know the impact such a venue would have on San Antonio’s businesses, reputation and economic future. Meanwhile, members and their families enjoyed first-class cuisine, danced to the tunes of the times and had good times with friends.

Texas laws prohibited selling liquor by the drink except in private clubs. To create a club environment suitable for the luxury of The St. Anthony, the hotel lured internationally-known decorator Dorothy Draper, a top interior designer whose name was synonymous with glamour, to create The St. Anthony Club. As a

Be a Part of History

The renovated hotel maintains the timeless elegance that has dazzled guests for more than a century. As part of its grand re-opening celebration, The St. Anthony is offering a special history package that gives a glimpse into the historic landmark’s extraordinary story. Guests who reserve the grand opening offer will receive a copy of “Dusting Off A Legend: The St. Anthony Hotel”, as well as a concierge-led history tour of the property that will explain details of the artwork and antiques that grace the hotel, as well the stories behind the legendary St. Anthony Club, Anacacho Room and the celebrities who have enjoyed The St. Anthony’s legendary hospitality. The package also features Double Starpoints® per stay for Starwood Preferred Guest members and two signature cocktails at The St. Anthony Club to toast the rebirth of the “Queen of San Antonio”. The offer is valid for stays through December 31, 2015, and may be booked online or by calling 866-716-8166 and asking for rate plan LAPKG1.

designer, Draper was known for originating trends and declaring, "If everyone likes it, it's too blasé." The St Anthony Club, a \$1 million renovation, would be Draper's first Texas hotel project.

Draper tore down walls and dismantled beautiful rooms, including the hotel's famed Tapestry Room, to fashion a well-appointed British pub as the cocktail room and a separate, spacious dining room with wooden dance floor. She brought in objects d'art from England, France, Holland and India. The fabric on the walls changed seasonally, as did the matching dinnerware.

San Antonians and out-of-towners of means flocked to the exclusive setting to dine, dance and enjoy liquor by the drink legally. Charter memberships quickly sold to a "Who's Who of San Antonians", and anyone who was someone belonged, though a master list of members through the years is not in the hotel's files. The club had special tablecloths printed with signatures of its members, given as complimentary gifts to the members and used on pub tables in the evening. At its peak in 1973, membership totaled more than 1,600, including former President Lyndon B. Johnson, who frequented the club, his Secret Service team in tow.

Much of the decade-long planning for HemisFair '68, San Antonio's world's fair, was done over lunch in the club. Surrounded by exclusivity, class and friendliness, committee members met, planned, debated and worked through the myriad of details necessary for San Antonio to accomplish such an enormous feat.

Big businesses, too, were created over martini lunches. For instance, Southwest Airlines' original triangular route was drawn on a St. Anthony Club napkin. "Many a man drew lots of things on St. Anthony Club napkins, not just me, and stuck it in his pocket," said Herb Kelleher, Southwest Airlines CEO, and entrepreneur Red McCombs negotiated his purchase of the San Antonio Spurs in the club in the early 1970s. "The negotiations involving the Spurs took place in The St. Anthony Club because I went there every single day for lunch," explains McCombs.

Though Texas legalized liquor by the drink in 1971, The St. Anthony Club era didn't end until the early 1980s. However, the St. Anthony Club is once again greeting guests with the club's former elegance and ambiance—no membership required.

About The St. Anthony, a Luxury Collection Hotel, San Antonio

A Texas jewel reborn, crafted from the dreams of two Texas cattlemen in 1909, The St. Anthony, a Luxury Collection Hotel, was the first luxury hotel in San Antonio and has remained one of the finest expressions of Texas hospitality for more than a century. Featuring 277 guest rooms and suites, as well as more than 31,500 square feet of indoor and outdoor meeting and event space in the heart of downtown San Antonio, The St. Anthony is an unrivaled classic reborn with contemporary glamour and opulence. The hotel's timeless elegance and tradition, fused with stunning city views and modern design, serve as the epicenter of San Antonio's social scene, including its sixth-floor outdoor pool and tenth-floor rooftop lounge, as well as the storied St. Anthony Club, a cocktail lounge with historic tales to share, Rebelle, San Antonio's newest culinary destination, and Haunt, a bar offering classic cocktails inspired by the haunting legends of The St. Anthony. For reservations or for more information, contact 210-227-4392 or visit www.thestanthonyhotel.com. #TheStAnthony, #TexasJewelReborn

About The Luxury Collection Hotels & Resorts

The Luxury Collection® brand is comprised of world-renowned hotels and resorts offering unique, authentic experiences that evoke lasting, treasured memories. For the global explorer, The Luxury Collection offers a gateway to the world's most exciting and desirable destinations. Each hotel and resort is a unique and cherished expression of its location; a portal to the destination's indigenous charms and treasures. Magnificent decor, spectacular settings, impeccable service and the latest modern conveniences combine to provide a uniquely enriching experience. Originated in 1906 under the CIGA® brand as a collection of Europe's most celebrated and iconic properties, today The Luxury Collection brand is a glittering ensemble of nearly 100 of the world's finest hotels and resorts in more than 30 countries in bustling cities and spectacular destinations around the world. The Luxury Collection includes award-winning properties that continuously exceed guest expectations by offering unparalleled service, style and class while celebrating each hotel's distinctive heritage and unique character. All of these hotels, many of them centuries old, are internationally recognized as being among the world's finest. For more information, please visit www.luxurycollection.com. #theluxurycollection