

HISTORY OF HOTEL PHILLIPS

The Glennon Hotel stood on the northwest corner of 12th & Baltimore as a symbol of elegance. It is also known for housing Harry S. Truman's Haberdashery. However, in January of 1929, it was leased to Charles E. Phillips, a long-time Kansas City hotel and apartment builder. Mr. Phillips commissioned Boilet & Lauck to design the Phillips House Hotel on this site.

In 1930, an "invisible" ceiling was created with black mirrors that gave an illusion of height to the lobby ceiling. Elevators with a speed of 600 feet per minute, polished herringbone floors, and walnut woodwork created an atmosphere of European elegance and Kansas City hospitality. As a last, memorable embellishment, Charles Phillips commissioned Jorgen C. Dreyer, Kansas City's leading sculptor at that time, to create the golden lady who is still perched between the staircases leading to the Mezzanine in the main lobby. Dawn, mythical mother of stars, represents Dreyer's ideal woman. One of the models that posed for Dawn was Lillian Kincaid, a professional gymnast and performer for Ringling Brothers Circus. Dawn is an 11-foot high gilt figure of a winged girl riding on the crest of a wave. Her arms are stretched high above her head to hold a torch. She is a symbol of the warmth and hospitality of Hotel Phillips.

Early in 1931, radio receivers were installed in the Hotel connected to loud speakers hidden in walls and chandeliers. Tradesmen moved to the music as the Phillips came to completion. No employer among the many subcontractors or the Phillips Building Company complained about this cheerful atmosphere.

The hotel's grand opening on February 23, 1931 included more than 500 dinner guests and 210 houseguests. The Phillips House Hotel was the tallest hotel in Kansas City at that time with 20 floors and 450 rooms. It was built for a total of \$1.6 million dollars. A Central High School graduate named Maxine Tappan, who became a nationally known opera singer and actress, made her first return performance to Kansas City in the Cabana room as part of the grand opening celebration.

The Walnut Room, now known as the Phillip Chop House, served as a busy officers club during World War II. After dinner, the gentlemen would retire to the third floor to the popular lounge called the Tropics. The sound of thunder was piped in and the lights fluttered and went out. A mechanical hula girl would emerge from behind the bar and dance in a grass skirt while it rained behind the bar.

Three murals, painted by Daniel MacMorris with the assistance of Mrs. Mignon Worley, were displayed on the north wall of the new "Pioneer" room in 1941. These murals depicted the arrival of early settlers in the Mid-West by covered wagon: some stopping in the fertile valleys of the territory, some continuing westward, and some of the murals showed hostile Indians. The new "Pioneer" room adjoined the mezzanine and was used to organize dinners and meetings for up to 300 people.

On December 12, 1952, a fire broke out on the second floor in a part of the building used by the Hotel for repairing furniture, painting, and other tasks. The fire destroyed the adjacent Ring-Side Grill. The damage was estimated between \$250,000 and \$300,000.

The Sir Loin room, formerly the Walnut Room, made its debut as a steak house in 1954. A suit of armor was brought in as a feature attraction. It was a very popular eating establishment where one could get a pretty fair meal for 75 cents.

Many famous faces have passed through the art deco styled lobby of the Phillips. Dwight D. Eisenhower stayed at the Hotel, and President Truman was known to "drop in" frequently. Various senators and governors stayed at the Phillips House, and screen stars such as the Barrymore family and Wallace Berry were overnight guests as well.

In April of 1971, the Phillips family considered converting the building into office or other such useful space. Big convention business was lost due to inadequate exhibition space in Kansas City. On April 4, 1971, the Phillips House Hotel closed after slightly more than 40 years of memories. More than 100 guests stayed the final evening.

On October of 1974, the Hotel Phillips opened 22 of its 384 rooms following a \$500,00 renovation. The Crystal Room, a mezzanine area, was redecorated and used for occasional special dinners and dancing events. The Cabana Room was enlarged with space formerly taken by the Hotel's barbershop. The About Town Coffee Shop was also remodeled. Televisions replaced the radios in every room.

The hotel held an open house in October of 1974, featuring five murals by Ion Paleologue depicting famous London landmarks. Guests toured the Hotel viewing the results of \$1.8 million spent over the last two years to renovate the building.

In April of 1975, a new management agreement was signed with Ramada Inns, Inc. One May 3, 1976, the Oppenstein Brothers Charitable Foundation gave the Phillips House title to Rockhurst University. The building was to become an

educational and business conference center. Areas of the Hotel remained open and the agreement with Ramada Inn, Inc. was still in effect.

Rockhurst University decided that it wasn't interested in the hotel business in 1977 so the Phillips was put on the market. Many rooms were in general disrepair, and the Hotel had only a 35 percent occupancy level. The Phillips House Hotel was sold to an Arkansas-New Mexico partnership. The new owners planned extensive refurbishment for the Hotel. Within a year, however, the Phillips House was up for sale again. Only the 20th floor had been remodeled at a cost of \$200,00. All of the Hotel's furnishings were sold in an auction.

On July 8, 1979, the Phillips House was placed on the National Registry of Historic Places. It was nominated as a classic example of art deco architecture. Kansas City's image-makers wanted to return the Phillips House Hotel to its former elegant status. In December, the Phillips House was sold to Phillips House Associates, Ltd. This association was based in Arkansas. The sale of bonds helped to finance the most extensive renovation of the Phillips ever undertaken to that time.

In June, a \$9 million renovation began and opened its doors nine months later. The newly renovated Phillips House Hotel celebrated its grand opening ceremonies on May 1, 1981.

About every other wall was removed to create 217 parlor-bedroom suites instead of the former 360 rooms. The "invisible" ceiling, the golden lady, and the original walnut paneling in the mezzanine remained. The Sir Loin Room became Harry T's Lounge. The Hotel received code and safety updates and handicap improvements.

Feasibility studies projected a promising economy, but didn't anticipate the chill that followed. On July 1, 1988, the Phillips House Hotel was sadly closed again.

In the autumn of 1990, The Phillips House reopened as the Radisson Suite Hotel. Great pains were taken to keep the original art deco look intact. The elegance was carried into Walt Bodine's Steakhouse on the lower level named for a local personality and connoisseur. The Radisson became the Hotel Phillips in 1998 and was put up for sale as it had again fallen on hard times.

With a passion and track record for restoring once elegant hotels to their original splendor, Milwaukee, Wisconsin based Marcus Hotels and Resorts, a division of the Marcus Corporation, purchased the hotel in May 2000. The hotel was closed in September 2000 and underwent a \$28 + million "top to bottom renovation", re-opening the hotel in September 2001. It now joins Milwaukee's famed Pfister

Hotel, The Hilton Milwaukee City Center, and Grand Geneva Resort & Spa (the former Playboy Club Resort Hotel at Lake Geneva, WI) as an example of Marcus Hotels and Resorts commitment to operational excellence and expertise in restoring great hotels.

The extensive renovation of the 1931 building into a sophisticated, urban, boutique hotel focused on upholding the design styles of the original art deco, art nouveau period influences. Folkus Design of Kansas City created the interior transformation that celebrates the past yet exceeds current expectations for quality hotels.

In July of 2001, following an inspection of the renovation, Hotel Phillips was awarded membership in Preferred Hotels & Resorts, Worldwide, an International association of top-quality, guest focused luxury hotels. To sustain membership the property must uphold an exhaustive quality assurance program. In August of 2002 the hotel received their 4 Diamond rating from AAA.

With “high-touch” services for business travelers and meetings Hotel Phillips again offers personal, top-quality guest experiences based on Marcus Hotels’ “Marcus Magic” philosophy. Marcus Hotels’ service-oriented credo, “People Pleasing People”, is now part of Hotel Phillips’ historic heritage as one of Kansas City’s grand hotels. The hotel reopened on September 13, 2001 to great acclaim.

We share this history to celebrate the hotel’s collective past and remind ourselves that quality customer service and continued investment of physical upkeep will keep Hotel Phillips providing for the needs of discriminating guests, travelers and patrons. It is our desire to never see the doors closed again.

Thank you for choosing to stay with us.



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