

history of the drake hotel chicago

History of the Drake Hotel Chicago is a captivating story that intertwines luxury, elegance, and a rich heritage that dates back to the early 20th century. Renowned for its opulent design and prestigious clientele, the Drake Hotel has become an iconic symbol of Chicago's architectural and social fabric. Since its grand opening in 1920, the hotel has played host to countless dignitaries, celebrities, and important events, making it a pivotal part of the city's history.

The Origins of the Drake Hotel

The Drake Hotel was conceived by successful businessman and hotelier, John B. Drake, who envisioned a luxurious retreat in the heart of Chicago. In the 1910s, Chicago was rapidly growing and evolving, and there was a demand for high-end accommodations that could cater to the needs of affluent travelers and prominent figures.

Construction and Opening

- **Construction Began:** The construction of the Drake Hotel commenced in 1916, designed by the renowned architecture firm, Holabird & Roche.
- **Grand Opening:** The hotel opened its doors on June 5, 1920, featuring 537 guest rooms and 75 suites, each designed with exquisite attention to detail.

The hotel's design, characterized by its Georgian Revival style, included lavish furnishings and intricate decor that reflected the opulence of the era. Upon its opening, the Drake Hotel was immediately recognized as one of the finest hotels in the country.

The Golden Age of the Drake Hotel

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the Drake Hotel became a social hub for Chicago's elite. Its grand ballroom hosted high-profile events, including charity galas, debutante balls, and lavish weddings. The hotel was not only a place to stay but a landmark where the city's social life flourished.

Prestigious Guests and Events

The Drake Hotel has welcomed a wide array of distinguished guests over the decades, including:

- Royalty: Notably, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor stayed at the hotel during their visit to Chicago.
- Celebrities: Legendary figures such as Frank Sinatra and Marilyn Monroe frequented the hotel, adding to its allure and reputation.
- Political Figures: Several U.S. presidents, including Franklin D. Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy, have held events or stayed at the Drake Hotel.

The hotel also became famous for hosting the annual “Chicago Social Season,” which attracted high society from across the nation.

Architectural Significance

The architectural design of the Drake Hotel is a testament to the grandeur of early 20th-century hotels.

Distinct Features

- Georgian Revival Style: The hotel’s exterior showcases red brick and limestone, emphasizing its classical elements.
- Grand Lobby: Upon entering the lobby, guests are greeted by a stunning chandelier and elegant marble floors, embodying the luxury that the Drake represents.
- Exquisite Dining Options: The hotel has housed various fine dining establishments, most notably the renowned Cape Cod Room, famous for its seafood and upscale atmosphere.

These elements contribute to the hotel’s status as a historic landmark in Chicago.

Challenges Through the Decades

Despite its success, the Drake Hotel faced several challenges over the years, particularly during times of economic downturn and societal change.

The Great Depression and WWII

The Great Depression in the 1930s significantly impacted the hospitality industry. The Drake Hotel struggled to maintain its opulence during this tumultuous period. However, it adapted by offering more affordable rates and packages to attract a broader clientele.

During World War II, the hotel was used to house military personnel and offered significant discounts to

service members and their families.

Renovations and Revivals

- 1960s Renovations: In the 1960s, the hotel underwent major renovations to modernize its facilities while preserving its historic charm.
- 1990s Update: Another extensive renovation took place in the 1990s, enhancing guest rooms and public spaces to meet contemporary standards.

These renovations helped the Drake Hotel maintain its status as a premier destination in Chicago.

The Drake Hotel Today

In recent decades, the Drake Hotel has continued to thrive, adapting to the needs of modern travelers while honoring its rich history.

Modern Amenities

- Luxury Accommodations: The hotel now offers a variety of room types, including luxurious suites with breathtaking views of Lake Michigan.
- Event Spaces: The Drake has become a popular venue for weddings, corporate events, and social gatherings, boasting over 30,000 square feet of event space.
- Dining Experiences: The hotel continues to provide exceptional dining experiences, with the Cape Cod Room and other on-site dining options.

The Drake Hotel remains a beloved institution in Chicago, where history and modern luxury seamlessly coexist.

The Legacy of the Drake Hotel

The history of the Drake Hotel Chicago is more than just a tale of brick and mortar; it is a narrative woven into the very fabric of Chicago's identity. The hotel stands as a symbol of elegance, resilience, and the enduring spirit of a city that has weathered many storms.

Preserving the Heritage

Preserving the legacy of the Drake Hotel is crucial for maintaining its significance in Chicago's history. The hotel continues to honor its past by:

- Hosting Historical Tours: Offering guided tours that highlight the hotel's rich history and notable events.
- Maintaining Architectural Integrity: Upholding the original design elements while incorporating modern features.

As the Drake Hotel moves forward, it remains committed to providing unparalleled service and luxury while preserving the legacy that has made it a cherished landmark for over a century.

Conclusion

The **history of the Drake Hotel Chicago** is a remarkable journey that reflects the grandeur and evolution of one of the country's most prestigious hotels. From its opulent beginnings to its modern-day offerings, the Drake Hotel has consistently represented the pinnacle of hospitality and elegance. As it continues to welcome guests from around the world, the Drake remains a timeless symbol of Chicago's rich heritage and vibrant culture.

Frequently Asked Questions

When was the Drake Hotel in Chicago opened?

The Drake Hotel opened on New Year's Eve, December 31, 1920.

Who was the architect behind the design of the Drake Hotel?

The Drake Hotel was designed by the architectural firm of Marshall and Fox.

What is the historical significance of the Drake Hotel?

The Drake Hotel has hosted numerous dignitaries, celebrities, and events, making it a significant landmark in Chicago's history.

What style of architecture is the Drake Hotel known for?

The Drake Hotel is known for its Italian Renaissance Revival architectural style.

Which famous event took place at the Drake Hotel in 1941?

The Drake Hotel hosted the first-ever Miss America pageant in 1941.

What is the name of the famous bar located in the Drake Hotel?

The famous bar located in the Drake Hotel is called the Coq d'Or.

Has the Drake Hotel been featured in any films or television shows?

Yes, the Drake Hotel has been featured in several films and television shows, including 'The Fugitive' and 'The Untouchables'.

What renovations have been made to the Drake Hotel over the years?

The Drake Hotel has undergone several renovations to modernize its facilities while preserving its historic charm.

What notable guests have stayed at the Drake Hotel throughout its history?

Notable guests at the Drake Hotel have included royalty, such as Prince Charles and celebrities like Frank Sinatra.

Is the Drake Hotel considered haunted?

Yes, the Drake Hotel is rumored to be haunted, with ghost stories and tales of paranormal activity reported by guests and staff.

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