



GRANDE COLONIAL

LA JOLLA ∞ EST. 1913

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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THE GRANDE COLONIAL **A Legacy in La Jolla**

La Jolla's Grande Colonial hotel is the seaside town's oldest original hotel. The Colonial Apartments and Hotel, as it was known when it opened on February 1st, 1913, was the talk of the town and a foundation for the community. The original white, wood-framed Colonial Apartments and Hotel, designed by Richard Requa who was the master architect of the California Exposition in Balboa Park, was described as, "a perfectly appointed apartment hotel, with the finest sun parlor and lobby overlooking the ocean on the Pacific coast."



**The Original Colonial Apartments
& Hotel. Circa: 1920**

George Bane, who became sole owner of the Colonial in 1920, realized the tourist potential of this picturesque seaside town and decided to give the Colonial a whole new look. In 1925, he commissioned architect Frank Stevenson to design a hotel that would "rival anything in the West." It was a huge undertaking. The existing building was moved to the rear of the property and a new, four-story, concrete, mixed-use building was erected in its place. Completed in 1928 and boasting 28 apartments and 25 single hotel rooms, the new Colonial Hotel had the first sprinkler system west of the Mississippi; solid, unsupported, reinforced cement stairways and fire doors that still exist in the structure.

Even with its safety features, the Colonial was breathtaking. The "sunburst" design of windows and semi-circle domes of leaded glass above the French doors uniquely captured the sunlight and drew it into the hotel. Inside, the new interior included colonial fireplaces with marble hearths, ornate chandeliers and richly colored sofas and chairs. Rooms were available for \$25 to \$50 per month. Bane said of the new Colonial, "I've always had confidence in La Jolla, and I still do. This building is the concrete expression of my faith."



Prospect Street. Circa: 1928

After opening the new Colonial, Bane had leased the entire property to a “Hollywood man” named W. S. Beard. Unhappy with the way Beard was running things, Bane reorganized the business in 1931, and R.C. Bugler was brought in as the manager. One year later, a more solid financial plan was drawn for the hotel and the rest of La Jolla grew up around this community cornerstone.



The Original La Jolla Pharmacy. Home today to NINE-TEN Restaurant. Circa: Unknown

The La Jolla Drugstore, next door to the Colonial, was soon woven into its history. In 1926, the store was purchased by Kansas native Silas O. Putnam, and moved inside the Colonial’s main building when it opened in 1928. Putnam had spent one winter in Southern California’s temperate climate and decided to make La Jolla his home. After he bought the drugstore and moved it to its new home, he added an ice cream parlor on the sidewalk that served up chocolate sodas and banana splits. The drugstore became a prime location for locals to gather, talk and watch the few passers by. The pharmacist, employed by Putnam, considered it a big day if he filled more than three prescriptions. Well loved by the townspeople, the pharmacist was also the father of Gregory Peck. Peck, who grew up in La Jolla, eventually left for Hollywood and became a movie star.

Later on, the Colonial was a temporary home to some of Hollywood’s up and coming stars that were performing at the La Jolla Playhouse, founded by Peck. Charlton Heston, Dorothy McGuire, Groucho Marx, Jane Wyatt, Eve Arden, Pat O’Brien, David Niven and many other celebrities occupied the hotel well into the late 1950s.

During the World War II years, the Colonial became home to many of the “top brass” from nearby Camp Callan. While the men were at Camp during the day, their wives volunteered for the local Red Cross. At night, the hotel’s sunroom was partitioned to create accommodations for single servicemen. In 1960, the drugstore needed more space, so Putnam’s son, “Putty” moved the establishment to new quarters, much to the chagrin of the community. Over time, the once grand hotel fell into a state of disrepair.

In 1976, three local partners purchased the Colonial for approximately \$1 million. The Colonial’s name was changed to the Colonial Inn. Over the next four years the hotel underwent a \$3 million restoration that brought back its original grandeur. The 75-room property was designed “like an elegant, European hotel” by San Diego’s Robert Carlisle. No expense was spared - from mahogany trim and wood moldings to stylish leaded glass chandeliers and crystal doorknobs.



The Colonial. Circa: 1928

The restoration was so successful that the Colonial Inn received the “People in Preservation” award from the Save Our Heritage Organization. It was said that, “the Colonial Inn... brings the very best from La Jolla’s past tastefully into the present. Elegance, continental service, graceful design and décor, all embraced in the ambience of a small European hotel.”

In 1980, the space once occupied by Putnam’s drugstore became Putnam’s Grille. Reflecting the La Jolla of the 1920s, the restaurant was redesigned to feature dark wood paneling, wrought iron chandeliers and ceiling fans, oak dining sets and large picture windows that created an open, fluid environment. The original soda fountain was replaced with a mirrored back bar and alcoholic beverages were served instead of ice cream sodas. The restaurant also stayed true to its heritage by offering diners sidewalk seating, continuing the tradition of the past 85 years.

Business continued to be good for the inn, and in 1988, it was sold for an estimated \$13.85 million to a Japanese-based investment firm, Tokyo Masuiwaya California. In 1993, “La Jolla’s jewel,” as the Colonial Inn was affectionately referred to, celebrated its 80th birthday.

In July of 1998, Franklin Croft LLC and Fargo Hotel investors LLC joined forces to create Fargo Colonial LLC and purchased the hotel, soon after changing its name to the Grande Colonial. Fargo Colonial LLC brought aboard hotel veteran Terry Underwood as general manager in 1999. From December 1999 through July 2001, the Grande Colonial underwent an extensive \$5 million renovation and, under the leadership of Underwood, all 75 guest rooms, lobby and restaurant were dramatically upgraded.

Putnam’s Grille closed its doors in February 2001 and the Grande Colonial now houses one of the region’s finest dining experiences, NINE-TEN Restaurant. The new restaurant opened in July 2001. From the outdoor terrace, NINE-TEN guests enjoy the gorgeous sunsets for which southern California is famous. Since opening, the restaurant has garnered numerous awards and accolades including a “very good to excellent” rating by ZAGAT. Additionally, the restaurant boasts: San Diego’s 2014 Best Chef of the Year Award, a Rising Star Chef Award and San Diego Chef Hall of Fame induction (all three for Executive Chef Jason Knibb, who was also a 2011 contestant on Iron Chef America, challenging Bobby Flay to a seafood showdown); San Diego Magazine’s “Best Hotel Restaurant” and “Best American Restaurant”; the California Restaurant Association's "Best Hotel Restaurant"; Gayot's "Top 10 Gastronomy Cuisine Restaurants in the US"; Wine Spectator’s “Award of Excellence”; and a feature nod in the Los Angeles Times, boasting NINE-TEN as “one of the year’s most exciting discoveries.” NINE-TEN also consistently holds a top 10 position on Trip Advisor of all restaurants in La Jolla.

In 2007, the hotel took another stride forward as it unveiled the completion of an \$8 million restoration project. Included was the renovation of the hotel’s existing 75 guest rooms, suites and corridors in the main building, as well as replacement of the original single-pane, wood-framed windows with double-pane, screenless, tempered glass windows significantly improving the energy efficiency and sound insulation. The project also included the preservation of two adjacent historic landmarks, the Little Hotel by the Sea (from 1924) and the Garden Terraces (from 1926), adding 18 new suites to the hotel’s inventory (all with kitchens or kitchenettes and many with fireplaces). The eight-suite Little Hotel by the Sea and the ten-suite Garden Terraces, originally built as hotels, had operated as residential apartment complexes for the past 30 years and, under the guidance from the San Diego Historical society, had now been restored to their original glory for the community to enjoy for years to come. To recognize their historical significance in the development of La Jolla, both properties were designated as historic sites in 1984 and 1990 respectively.



The Little Hotel by the Sea. Circa: 1930.



Two noteworthy elements of the Little Hotel by the Sea included the restoration of the rooftop “loft” and deck, and restoration of the 1929 Baker & Sons elevator. The rooftop is now used as a guest library and sitting room, as well as an outdoor terrace providing panoramic views of the Pacific. The Baker & Sons elevator, restored to full operation, is a four-passenger, solid-mahogany elevator housed in a steel tower. Soon after it was added to the hotel back in 1929, The Little Hotel by the Sea became recognized as the “The Smallest Hotel in the World with an Elevator”.

In January of 2012, the hotel unveiled yet another major milestone in its nearly 100-year history – the completion of a \$500,000 renovation of its entry and foyer, lobby and surrounding public spaces and two adjacent meeting rooms. In anticipation of the hotel's Centennial Anniversary, the owners went to great lengths to enhance the feel of the hotels’ still intact turn-of-the-century architecture designed by noted area architect Richard Requa back in 1913. The sophisticated new décor carefully preserves the Grande Colonial’s enduring historic appeal, infusing a classic European ambiance and a refined, contemporary sophistication. In this spirit, the result showcases the fine architectural details – such as original Georgian style arches, original cast plaster crown moldings, lead glass windows and intricate hand-stenciled ceilings.



**The “new” Grande Colonial Lobby.
Circa: 2012**

On February 1st, 2013, the Grande Colonial celebrated what can be considered its most significant milestone: its 100-year anniversary. Festivities to commemorate the Centennial dotted the calendar, helping one of San Diego’s most esteemed hotels share the stories of the movers and shakers who have passed through its doors in the 100 years since the hotel was founded. As part of the year-long Centennial celebration, the hotel developed a historic video montage and history booklet, as well as hosted several events to which members of the community were invited. Additionally, a time capsule was buried underneath the hotel containing a collection of items relevant to the hotel, our community and to our present day. The capsule was dedicated with a permanent plaque inviting those who come after us to remember us and the time in which we lived by opening the capsule on February 1st, 2113.

In 2017, it was NINE-TEN’s turn for attention, receiving \$750,000 in improvements. In addition to major kitchen improvements, the entire main dining room and bar were completely refurbished. New elements include a refreshing color scheme with infusions of emerald green and light wood, while keeping with the restaurant’s existing stone tiled floor. The wood cladding throughout the room was resurfaced, changing the dark mahogany tones to a much lighter, aged-oak scheme. New paint and wall coverings also lightened up the dining room with a more modern vibe. The main focal point, however, is the vibrant and locally inspired ocean and fauna wall panorama created by local, renowned artist, Dana Montlack, alluding to the restaurant’s iconic location at La Jolla Cove.



**The “new” NINE-TEN Restaurant.
Circa: 2017**

And then just less than two years later, Bane’s legacy continued as the hotel completed a \$3.2 million renovation of all 93 guest rooms and suites, including a majority of the bathrooms. Artfully recapturing the hotel’s storied past with a keen focus on modern sensibilities, the new design infused a classic European ambiance and a refined, contemporary sophistication. The whimsical interiors & custom baths provide a relaxing atmosphere, allowing guests to open their windows to the sights and sounds of the seaside just steps away.



**2019 \$3.2 Million Room Renovation
Circa: 2019**

At the same time, the hotel unveiled the completion of another historic restoration project, the adjacent Swansea Apartments, originally constructed in 1927 by local designer and builder, William B. Melhorn of the Melhorn Construction Company. The Tudor-style building and four apartments have been completely restored and converted into four, 1-bedroom suites, and are now a part of the Grande Colonial's total 97-room inventory.



**Historic Restoration of the Swansea
Apartments; Hotel Expansion.
Circa: 2019**

Just as the hotel envisioned by George Bane, the Grande Colonial La Jolla, is a classic European-style hotel that rivals anything in the West. The Grande Colonial staff strives to preserve the heritage laid down by the hotel’s founders more than 100 years ago by providing the most gracious experience in resort and business accommodations.

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