Guide to the Hotel del Coronado Collection MS 46

Finding aid prepared by Jennifer Ho
Collection processed as part of grant project supported by the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) with generous funding from The Andrew Mellon Foundation.
San Diego History Center Document Collection
1649 El Prado, Suite 3
San Diego, CA, 92101
619-232-6203
June 16, 2011
Title: Hotel del Coronado Collection
Identifier/Call Number: MS 46
Contributing Institution: San Diego History Center Document Collection
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 0.25 Linear feet(1 box)
Date (inclusive): 1888-1998
Abstract: This collection contains items pertaining to the Hotel del Coronado and its history, as well as information on hotel expansion plans in the 1990s.
creator: Hotel del Coronado (Coronado, Calif.).

Biographical / Historical Notes
The Hotel del Coronado was established by Elisha S. Babcock of Indiana and Hampton L. Story of Chicago who were rabbit hunting in Coronado in 1884 and saw the potential for a grand seaside resort. Babcock and Story combined forces with Jacob Gruendike, president of the First National Bank of San Diego, to purchase the Coronado peninsula in 1885 for $110,000, and formed the Coronado Beach Company to finance Babcock and Story’s seaside resort vision. In 1888 their hotel, the Hotel del Coronado, opened to great national acclaim. Designed by James and Merritt Reid of Reid & Reid in a Queen Anne Victorian style, the Hotel del Coronado contained a dining room with a seating capacity of 1,000, 750 guest rooms, and a bowling alley, theater, and ballroom. The hotel was the first large structure in the country to utilize electricity for lighting. A hotel legend states that Thomas Edison himself directed the installation of its electrical wiring, although this remains unverified. Since the hotel’s opening, its guests have included members of royalty, eleven United States presidents, and a myriad of notable personalities and celebrities. Proposed property expansions in the late 1990s caused local controversy as owners made plans to develop and modernize amidst the protests of residents and longtime fans of the hotel. Despite this, the hotel continues to be extremely popular with tourists and locals alike. The Hotel del Coronado has been honored with numerous accolades and distinctions, including designation as a National Historic Landmark in 1977 and being named one of the Top Ten Resorts in the World by USA Today in 2008.

Scope and Content
The collection consists of items pertaining to the Hotel del Coronado. Highlights include marketing brochures, narratives on hotel history, guest and visitor information, and event information. There are also documents on the Hotel’s controversial expansion plans in the late 1990s, including plans, news articles, and correspondence.

Arrangement
The collection is arranged into two series:
Series I: Hotel Information
Series II: Hotel Expansion Proposal
Within each series, items are arranged by subject.

Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements
Some booklets have loose bindings. (6/16/11)

Preferred Citation
Hotel del Coronado Collection, MS 46, San Diego History Center Document Collection, San Diego, CA.

Processing Information
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Conditions Governing Access
This collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use
The San Diego History Center (SDHC) holds the copyright to any unpublished materials. SDHC Library regulations do apply.

Immediate Source of Acquisition
Accession numbers 810721, 820701 and 771103B.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Babcock, Elisha S.
California Preservation Foundation.
Series I: **Hotel Information**

**Box-folder 1:1**  
Hotel history: booklets and brochures, marketing ephemera, 1937-1971 and undated

**Box-folder 1:2**  
Hotel history: narratives and commentary, 1949-1974 and undated

Includes:  
Copy of thesis, educational narratives, and letter correcting inaccurately reported hotel history.

**Box-folder 1:3**  
Thomas Edison hotel legend, correspondence and article, 1988-1993 and undated

**Box-folder 1:4**  
Hotel and visitor information, marketing ephemera, 1888-1985 and undated

Includes:  
Copy of article recalling experience at Hotel, December 22, 1888.  
Dinner menu, May 8, 1901.  
Letter regarding hotel reservation request from Chicago, January 26, 1911.  
Newsletter and brochures outlining available Hotel resources and planned activities.  
Souvenir and informational picture-books.  
Brochures on room rates and hosting events at Hotel.

**Box-folder 1:5**  
Invitations and programs for hotel events, 1902-1978 and undated

Includes:  
Invitation (metal) to Official National Landmark Dedication Ceremonies for the Hotel, October 30, 1977.

Series II: **Hotel Expansion Proposal**

**Box-folder 1:6**  
Expansion plans, undated

Includes:  
Color photograph with marker notations of “structural buildable planning area 2.”  
Copies of Hotel del Coronado Specific Plan Exhibits illustrations.
Box-folder 1:7  Correspondence, 1995 June 13-1998 January 17 and undated
Includes:
Letters discussing drafts of the Hotel del Coronado Specific Plan and Hotel’s status as a National Historic Landmark.

Box-folder 1:8  News articles, 1995 June 7-1997 May 23 and undated
Box-folder 1:9  Residents’ responses, 1995 June 12-1997 July 23 and undated
Includes:
Correspondence and letters to the Editor (newspaper).