

## THE BEGINNING OF SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL

The Roaring Twenties, a booming metropolis and a \$3,000,000 architectural masterpiece—for certain, it was history in the making. The Knickerbocker Hotel, then named the Davis Hotel after the original General Manager, opened its doors to anticipating Chicagoans on Monday, May 16, 1927. Notable architects Rissman & Hirschfield, who are responsible for many impressive structures in the city's skyline, built the 350-room, 14-story, gothic-inspired gem in less than one year. It was an intoxicating time in America, one that fueled rapid change and invention, artistic ingenuity and high-society pleasantries. Throughout the years, the Georgian-style Crystal Ballroom, with its expansive 25-foot, gilded dome ceiling and its graceful balcony, has been the setting for many prominent gatherings, conventions, business meetings and extravagant galas. During the early years of the hotel, guests could watch the famous dance act of Veloz and Yolanda twirl about the illuminated glass dance floor, casting a brilliant spectrum of colors. When one of Yolanda's heels cracked the floor, a glass square could be replaced in under 60 seconds, ensuring the show went on. Now plexiglass, the illuminated floor, the only one in a Chicago hotel, still dazzles guests after all these years. Rumor has it that when the stock market plummeted and prohibition reigned, Al Capone's brother Ralph operated a casino and speakeasy on the Penthouse Floor. Since access needed to be controlled, only one of the hotel's three passenger elevators was able to reach the top, where the illegal rooms were found. Adding some credibility to this story of connections to a shady underworld was a secret door leading to a stairway, which was discovered during a 1980s remodeling.

  
MILLENNIUM  
KNICKERBOCKER HOTEL  
CHICAGO



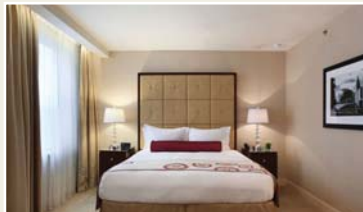


## LUMINARIES AND A LANDMARK

In 1931, after Allan Hurst purchased the hotel, the Davis was renamed the “Knickerbocker,” honoring his Dutch heritage. Hurst remained the General Manager until his death in 1959. Under his management during World War II and continuing through the Korean War, the extraordinary mezzanine became an Officer’s Club for commissioned officers of the U.S. Armed Forces and housed a 5,000-volume library. The rooms adjacent to the mezzanine were used for recreational purposes, such as card playing, smoking, lounging and writing. In 1952, the Knickerbocker was decked out in red, white and blue to host the California delegation of the Republican National Convention, with its leader Governor Earl Warren, who later became Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. Richard Nixon, a little known junior Senator in California, was also staying at the Knickerbocker. To everyone’s surprise, he became the nominee of the U.S. Vice Presidency and was quickly moved to a lavish, more prestigious suite within the hotel. During the same presidential campaign, a U.S. Senator from Massachusetts stayed at the Knickerbocker, and later became the American icon and 35th President—Democrat John Fitzgerald Kennedy. In the 60s, an engineer at the Knickerbocker received a strange request from several young girls peering in from the service hall on the hotel’s 11th floor. They begged the engineer to give them old bathroom equipment that was being removed from one of the hotel’s suites. The Rolling Stones happened to have been occupying the suite when parts were removed, and the fans wanted the equipment as a keepsake. Other well-known stars to have graced the halls over the years include Muhammad Ali, Daryl Hannah and Hugh Hefner.

## REINVENTING WITH RENOVATIONS

During the 1970s, 80s and 90s, the Knickerbocker changed ownership and management companies several times. Each owner, having a very different vision for the hotel, attempted to transform the Knickerbocker into an ultra-modern property in tandem with the decade. When Millennium Hotels and Resorts purchased the hotel in 1999, the flagship property finally returned to the distinguished architecture and timeless ambiance reminiscent of the hotel’s early years. With a substantial commitment to preserve historic integrity for future generations, the landmark property has since become a member of the Historic Hotels of America program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Today, after receiving a breathtaking \$27 million restoration, the landmark Millennium Knickerbocker Hotel is once again one of the premier destinations in Chicago. Its reinvented interior reflects influences from a classic era of the hotel’s origination translated into a current and modern interpretation.



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*The Knickerbocker’s Crystal Ballroom boasts a 25-foot, gold gilded dome ceiling and the city’s largest illuminated dance floor.*