

EL CORTEZ

History

- 1927** The El Cortez Hotel, inspired by Spanish Colonial Revival architecture, opens on Thanksgiving Day. El Cortez was financed by Richard T. Robinson, Jr. and designed by architects Albert R. Walker and Percy Eisen, designers of the famous Beverly Wilshire Hotel the same year.
- 1937** The landmark "El Cortez" sign is installed, illuminating the landmark for miles both day and night.
- 1940** The Sky Room is added on the 15th floor, creating perhaps the most memorable change to the building and elevating it on the social scene.
- 1951** San Francisco businessman Harry Handlery purchases the hotel from the El Cortez Company.
- 1954** The Caribbean wing is added, answering the city's need for a convention center in the heart of the Cortez Hill district.
- 1956** The famous Starlite Roof is added on the 12th floor, as is the Starlite Express, the second exterior glass elevator in the world and first in the United States.
- 1978** Rev. Morris Cerullo, head of World Evangelism, Inc., purchases the building from Paul Handlery. This purchase ushers El Cortez into an unusual but short period as home to an evangelical ministry.
- 1979** El Cortez closes and is vacated.
- 1990** El Cortez receives its Historic designation by the City of San Diego's Historic Site Board. The historic status opens the door for the review of a proposed restoration of the building to its original 1927 appearance and allows for the creation of modern, urban living spaces.
- 1997** El Cortez is purchased by the historic preservation development firm, The J. Peter Block Companies.
- 2000** The completion of the El Cortez restoration is celebrated during a gala benefit event.
- 2004** The J. Peter Block Companies hosts an exclusive showing of the Starlite Roof Penthouse, marking the conversion of the living spaces into luxury condominiums.