

History

Crowne Plaza San Marcos Resort History

In 1912, Dr. Alexander Chandler founded a small town southeast of Phoenix that bears his name. He dreamed of building an oasis in the desert, a resort that would bring the rich and famous from all over the world to the little town of Chandler. Dr. Chandler named this resort San Marcos after Friar Marcos de Niza, a priest, sent north from Mexico City to search for wealthy cities.

San Marcos opened in 1913. It was the first in Arizona to boast a full complement of amenities that included golf, tennis, horseback riding, and polo. There were afternoon teas, bridge, social gatherings and shopping. Famous people from all over the world came to the luxury of the San Marcos Hotel. They came in search of warmth, recreation, rest, and anonymity, and they left a legacy as rich and colorful as de Niza's mythical Cibola. The guest lists boast Hollywood stars like Fred Astaire, Joan Crawford, Bing Crosby, Clark Gable, Gloria Swanson, George Gobel, and Cher. President Herbert Hoover and his family stayed here as well as Christian Dior and Fritz Werner an internationally known artist.

Arthur Burnett Benton, who was an authority on California mission design, was hired as the architect of the resort. Renowned architect Frank Lloyd Wright, a close friend of Dr. Chandler's, spent considerable time at the construction site overseeing the project with his friend. Dr. Chandler and Mr. Wright even drew up plans for an even more modern San Marcos in the Desert, but the Depression caused financial hardships and the dream was never realized.

The grand opening was held on November 22, 1913. Five hundred people, including Thomas Marshall, then vice president of the United States, Arizona Governor W. P. Hunt and Congressman Carl Hayden were some of the distinguished guests in attendance.

The resort has undergone numerous changes since 1913. Bungalows were built west of the original building. A surrounding park was added featuring sunken gardens, walks, a pool and playfield. Another sixteen bungalows were added in 1924 along with the dining room, office wing, and enlarged lobby. All additions were carefully designed to blend with the original architecture. In the 30's, additional bungalows were added along with a small dining room and a writing room on the second floor.

In 1943, John Quarty became manager of the resort. E.W. Edwards of Cincinnati became the new owner two years later. Edwards was one of the largest private art collectors in the country and would exhibit his collections there. Quarty became sole owner of the resort in 1961.

In 1954, the 43rd season of the resort, the most extensive improvements took place. All baths were tiled and equipped with tubs and showers. The lobby, dining room and cocktail lounge also were remodeled and the guest rooms extended to accommodate 300. Wrought-iron grillwork replaced pergolas to give the resort a more modern Spanish appearance.

In 1986, the restoration of the Original building and the construction of the 250 new guest rooms began. The property reopened in 1987 as the San Marcos Resort.

The San Marcos Resort was transformed into the Crowne Plaza San Marcos Resort in 2006. With complete renovations including the Crowne Plaza Sleep Advantage Program and all new furnishings, the Crowne Plaza San Marcos Resort sets the standard again.

Dr. Chandler's dream of building an oasis in the desert was and still is a reality. The San Marcos Resort is a diamond in the desert. Its beauty and hospitality keep the guests returning. Even valley residents enjoy a get-a-way at the Crowne Plaza San Marcos Golf Resort. It is a place where one can boast of experiencing luxury along with a rich ninety-year history.

More Chandler Arizona history here.

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