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テーマメッセージ

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HOTEL BAR IN THE WORLD

THE MARK HOPKINS INTER-CONTINENTAL

"TOP OF THE MARK"

THE MARK HOPKINS INTER-CONTINENTAL, SAN FRANCISCO
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Outside Terrace in a suite

In this way, the “restaurant tasting” is the dish chosen as “Appetizer of the Year” in San Francisco: Sautéed Bluepoint Oysters and Serrana Cavia with Lemon and Chive sauce. Another is the original dish also created by Executive Sous-chef Peter Morency, “Smoked Lamb Loin (with Roast Garlic and Lamb Glace)”. Both of these have become very popular, and have been served in many other restaurants.

There are some dishes, however, which you can eat nowhere else but in Nob Hill Restaurant. One is the original “Crème Brûlée”, a beautiful reproduction of a two hundred-year-old recipe, prepared by a French pastry chef invited from New York. This dish was served Paul Boeuse’s own establishment.

Nob Hill Restaurant has its own small herb garden on the Mason Street side, in which about 30 kinds of herbs are grown. These herbs are effective in creating the unique tastes of the dishes which can only be enjoyed in Nob Hill Restaurant.

“Wines of America” has noted that Nob Hill Restaurant is also distinctive in another way. Marcel P. van Arst has created a system called “restaurant tasting” to maintain the great popularity and to increase the quality of Nob Hill Restaurant, in these severely competitive conditions.

Nob Hill Restaurant changes its menu every 3 or 4 months, in order to serve high-quality dishes using the freshest ingredients. Prior to making the final decisions on the menu, several outside guests, and the restaurant staff, have a meeting, at which they exchange opinions, taking sufficient time for thorough discussion, from the arrangement of food on serving dishes, to the quantities and cooking methods. Results of these discussions are reflected in the new menu when it is adopted. Guests attending these tastings include politicians, businessmen, and other lovers of gourmet food. They are mostly local people. Concerning the reasons for the establishment of the “restaurant tasting” system, Mr. Aest says, “A restaurant exists for the people who patronize it, not for the self-satisfaction of the general manager and the food and beverage staff. One of the restaurant’s duties is to maintain its distinctive features and its level of quality. I think that a restaurant must grow through the mutual interactions between the hotel, the town, and the people involved with the restaurant, including its guests.”

The menu here is changed about every six months. The season is not considered an important aspect for menu planning here, as it is by Nob Hill. Popular meals on the menu are retained, and changes in the menu are made from the viewpoint of improvement, not according to the season.

The Mark Hopkins has a relatively higher number of Japanese guests than other hotels in the Nob Hill area, such as Fairmont Hotel, Stanford Court, etc. Besides, a large number of Japanese businessmen stay at The Mark Hopkins, the hotel prepares a Japanese breakfast, which is quite authentic, for example miso soup, fish grilled with butter, steamed rice, Japanese pickles, and green tea. This Japanese breakfast was added to the menu about a year ago. The numbers of orders for it are still relatively low, but it does seem popular.

Numerous activities, including “Tea Dance”, since the hotel was established.

Many tourists visiting America, seem to spend all their time outside the hotel, and come back to the hotel only to sleep, and many hotel guests do not eat in the hotel. Mr. Aest points out that the hotel itself lacks attractions. He therefore tried various promotional activities to make The Mark Hopkins more attractive. As one of those activities, the “Tea Dance”, has continued until now, from its beginning in 1927, during the Prohibition Era, in a year after The Mark Hopkins opened. This dance party, held once a month in the Peacock Court, was the center of San Francisco society when it began. Amos Weeks and his orchestra were responsible for the music for these dances, for the first seven years they were held. The band today still plays the same style of music.

Don Needy’s Royal Society Jazz Orchestra, with Carla Nornamz on vocals, reproduce the music played by Amos Weeks’ orchestra at these days. A wide variety of guests attend these tea dances, for example Cyril Magin, the Chief of Protocol for San Francisco, Lauren Baccal, Peggy Fleming, Mayor Dianne Feinstein, etc. A different point of these parties from those days is that the “Tea Dance” is now held as a charity presentation, and play a role in deepening the hotel’s connections with the local area. The admission fee is ten dollars, and a maximum of 1,000 persons may participate. The sponsor of this charity dance changes for each occasion, but the preparation of tickets, the hand, and interior decorations, etc., are all handled completely by the hotel.

The hotel is also actively involved with other charity events in San Francisco, including fund-raising for the Museum of Modern Art, which has become a great sensation, and charity presentations sponsored by famous persons.

One activity which leads to deeper relationship with the local area, is the “Cable car lunch”, presented annually during “Cable Car Week”, for all those who work on the cable car system, the drivers, bell ringers, etc.

The Nob Hill Restaurant holds promotional activities with experts in many areas as guests; for example, the special “Dinner Party with Julia Child”, with the home cooking expert, Julia Childs. Others have included Robert Mondavi of the Mondavi Winery, and the “King of Caviar”, Christian Perrichon.

Nob Hill Restaurant does not hold an average-quality presentation every month, showing people the same thing every time. They will have truly high-quality activities each time, even fewer events.

The hotel has also appeared in many motion pictures, such as “Verigo”, directed by Alfred Hitchcock, “Bullock”, “The Woman in Red”, and the movies of Stephen Spielberg.

These could be very significant as promotion for the hotel.

THE MARK HOPKINS STANDS
AT THE TOP OF SAN FRANCISCO

There are fewer and fewer hotels these days, which have permanent residents, but The Mark Hopkins does have two. One is Mr. Cyril Magin, also called “Mr. San Francisco”, hotel director and Chief of Protocol for San Francisco. The other is Mrs. Esther Goodman, who has lived here since 1943, with her husband, who has already died. These permanent residents are distinguished additions to the hotel.

Many VIP’s visit The Mark Hopkins. Guests of the state, such as the Grand Duke and Duchess of Luxembourg, and government ministers from many nations, have been accommodated here.

Many people from Japan have stayed at this hotel, including many VIP’s from both the political and financial spheres, such as Japan’s Minister of Finance.

Marcel P. van Arst says, “When VIP’s and famous persons, regardless of whether they are American or from foreign countries, visit our hotel, this becomes very good advertising for the hotel. I do not consider the profit picture so important. Rather, I feel that people pay attention to the image evoked by the fact that our hotel has entertained these guests. This is more important.”

Mr. Aest is filled with enthusiasm and pride in being the general manager of The Mark Hopkins. I asked him one last question, about the relationship between San Francisco and The Mark Hopkins. He replied as follows, “I would almost say The Mark Hopkins is San Francisco”. 

Leland Stanford, a lawyer in New York, was asked by his older brother to join him in California. Stanford and his elder brother opened a shop which handled gold-mining tools, food, and general merchandise. Stanford was also a Republican; Stanford differs from the previous three men in that he had never prospered for gold himself. These 4 Republicans, who came to California at almost the same time as the ‘49ers, were all talented businessmen, and were almost identical in age. They later became important forces in the construction of the transcontinental railway, and were the most successful men in California, known as "The Big Four".

As everybody knows, San Francisco now flourishes as a gateway to the United States. The beginning of this development was not actually the gold rush; but a trade link with the east. However, for a while after the completion of the transcontinental railroad, which connected the west coast with the eastern states, California suffered unanticipated problems, due to the huge economic disparity between California and the eastern United States. There was a continuing series of retail bankruptcies, as both raw materials and finished products poured in from the eastern and central United States. Newspapers, too, were not at all competitive with the superior eastern printing technology.

In contrast, the eastern states gained a great advantage, since they were able to use the fine natural harbor in San Francisco, which they had long for many years as a footing to foreign trade with east Asia.

Four men – Stanford, Huntington, Crocker, and Hopkins – became the most powerful in California, with the construction of the transcontinental railroad. Known as "The Big Four", they quickly noted the importance of San Francisco, which was becoming the main western gateway to the United States, and made plans to get the ownership of the entire transportation system around San Francisco.

In 1865, in the midst of construction of the transcontinental railroad, they planned a route from Sacramento to San Diego, and established the Southern Pacific Railroad. The railroads from the southern and mid-western states, were mostly aimed at California. The Southern Pacific Railroad went toward the south, monopolizing the railway rights, and it was extended to New Orleans.

The Southern Pacific Railroad succeeded in gaining control of the complete railroad network in the whole western half of the continent, by combination with the Central Pacific Railroad in 1884, to create a new and larger Southern Pacific Railroad, and the basis of today's railroad system.

The assets of "The Big Four", who controlled 9,000 miles of railroad, operated a steamship company, and owned hundreds of acres of land, can be estimated at approximately $65,000,000 in the early 1870s. By the end of the 19th century, these four men controlled an amount of land which had increased to one fourth of all land in the entire state.

"THE NOBLES' HILL" LOOMS UP IN THE SAN FRANCISCO FOG

As you rode the cable car through San Francisco's dense fog from downtown, it takes you to the small hill known as "Nob Hill", where many high-class homes stand side by side.

Nob Hill used to be a high-class residential area, where the successful people of California gathered. It is still a symbol of California, which reveals the early pride in it, through its very name: Nob Hill is an abbreviation of "Nobles' Hill".

The cable car system, a popular San Francisco attraction, was established in 1873, as a mode of transportation which would connect Nob Hill with the downtown area. Ten cable car routes spread between Nob Hill and the downtown at the peak, but only three routes remain today.

Stanford was one of those who resided on Nob Hill. He built a huge mansion on the Hill, for the son on whom he doted, from which they could look down on foggy San Francisco.

Mark Hopkins and Collis Huntington also built their mansions in the Nob Hill district.

Nob Hill was most suitable for "The Big Four", who reached the heights of power in California. The mansions of these three men still remain, but as hotels. Stanford's residence became Stanford Court (introduced in Issue No. 7 of this magazine), Huntington's residence became the Huntington Hotel, and Mark Hopkins' mansion became The Mark Hopkins Intercontinental. Each of these hotels is proud of its high status.

Mark Hopkins' home was built for his wife, Mary. This most luxuriously decorated residence was located in the southern part of Nob Hill. It was completed in 1878, but Hopkins could not enjoy it, as he died a few years before it was completed. His wife, Mary stayed here for only 2 or 3 years, then returned to her old home in Massachusetts, at the age of 73. She then married Edward Sturtevant, an interior decorator 30 years her junior. She died in 1891, soon after her marriage to Sturtevant, and left an enormous estate worth $70,000,000. Her new husband, Edward, who succeeded to her fortune, donated the land and the mansion on Nob Hill, which had been included in the estate he inherited, to the Art Association of San Francisco, in 1893. His hope was that a school and museum would be built here.

San Francisco has had many strong earthquakes, but this durable mansion survived them all, included even the Great Earthquake of 1906. The house, however, was later burned down leaving only its foundation and chimney. Several years later, a school was built, in accordance with Sturtevant's wishes.

George D. Smith was a mining engineer who also carried on a business involving real estate. One day he was walking around Nob Hill, and passed the school. He began to think about building a hotel on the site, because of its excellent location. From here it is possible to see both downtown and San Francisco Bay at first sight. He bought the land in 1925, and the Mark Hopkins opened on December 3rd of the following year, an 8-story hotel designed so that every guest room enjoyed a beautiful view.

In 1962, prior to his retirement, Smith sold the hotel to the financier, Louis Lurie. Lurie told the surface rights for a ten-year period, in 1973, but continued to maintain ownership. At present, the land and the building are owned by Bob Murray, who also owns the San Francisco Giants team. The Intercontinental possesses only the borrowing rights, until the year 2063. This elegant hotel, even though it is relatively small in size (20 stories, 406 rooms) and was built 190 years ago, inherits both the image and the status of Mark Hopkins, one of "The Big Four".

"TOP OF THE MARK": A SAN FRANCISCO SYMBOL

"Top of the Mark" was originally a lounge built as part of the penthouse added to the hotel in 1932. From here, there is a panoramic 360° view, which is world-renowned. "Top of the Mark" has become a tourist attraction all tourists hopes to visit once at least.

During World War II, this spacious lounge was the scene of much passionate emotion, since it had become the custom for soldiers and sailors departing from San Francisco Bay, to have a last, parting drink here with their families, their lovers and their friends. Soldiers would leave from "Top of the Mark" to board their troop ships, while their friends and relatives stayed in the lounge seeing off until the ships disappeared. Even now, 40 years after the war's end, many businessmen visit here for their memories.

"Top of the Mark" has no kitchen, because no diners are served here, but its seafood wagon serves a wide variety of clam, oyster, and shrimp dishes in the bar, during the evenings. On Sundays, brunch is also served, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The lounge, in the hotel lobby is a lounge which is open from 11 a.m. to 1 a.m. There is entertainment every night, from 9 p.m. until closing; not just piano playing – guests can gather around the piano and sing, enjoying this bar's relaxed feeling. During the daytime, cocktails, snacks, and light meals, are served, and afternoo.

NOB HILL RESTAURANT MAINTAINS THE HIGH QUALITY

Top of the Mark symbolizes The Mark Hopkins, and on the other hand, Nob Hill Restaurant, on the first floor of the hotel, embodies the extremely high quality of The Mark Hopkins Hotel. Marcel P. van Aelst was appointed as general manager of The Mark Hopkins in 1983. Since then, Nob Hill Restaurant has been receiving high praise to raise its quality even higher. He has, however, adopted a system of complete separation of Nob Hill Restaurant from the regular hotel kitchens.
When you look down San Francisco Bay from Nob Hill, you have an expansive view of the entire area, with the Golden Gate Bridge, Oakland, and the piers—unless the view is blocked by that famous San Francisco fog!

San Francisco Bay, undiscovered until the end of the 16th century because of this capricious fog, was the ideal inlet for a port. The gold rush in the mid-19th century, and the development of San Francisco as a trading base for the Pacific area, realized the trans-continental railway which connected the east and west coasts of the North American continent. And San Francisco experienced great expansion as the most important city till now. The leaders of its early years, the men of power in those days, who were known as "The Big Four", built their residences on Nob Hill, the finest residential area in San Francisco, to show their power. Their huge mansions have now become high-class hotels. Of these Nob Hill hotels, The Mark Hopkins Inter-Continental, which is far superior to other hotels, with its established formality and splendidly grand view, will be introduced in this article.

**THE GOLD RUSH: WESTWARD-BOUND TRAVELLERS IN SEARCH OF "EL DORADO"**

Geographic obstacles around San Francisco include the Sierra Nevada mountains, in the east side of San Francisco, and the desert area called Death Valley. The Sierra Nevada mountains are a steep mountain chain, reaching 13,000 feet above sea level, and including the 15,000 feet the Mount Whitney.

The deep snow on the Sierra Nevada in winter, makes it extremely difficult to cross these mountains. Death Valley is 282 feet below sea level, the lowest spot in all of the United States. This great desert area extends for about 40 miles (from west to east) and about 300 miles (from north to south) on the south side of the Sierra Nevada mountains. This is a completely sterile zone, with a temperature in excess of 120°F in summer.

When these delay in development of the area of the United States farther west than the eastern side of the Sierra Nevada mountains, was entirely reasonable. In the 19th century, people finally ventured a move over. Because the legend of El Dorado they had heard in the mid 16th century realized.

Alluvial gold dust was discovered near Fort Sutter (now by John Augustus Sutter, (1803–1880)), resolved in the beginning of the "gold rush". Sutter's "right-hand man", W. Marshall, discovered this alluvial gold in January of 1848, at Coloma, in a branch stream of the American River, when he was in the area to cut timber. The news of the discovery of the gold vein spread instantly in California, and reached in New York in August of 1848. In "California Correspondence", in the Herald newspaper, which had the largest circulation in New York, El Dorado was no longer a legend or a rumor, so there was no reason for the discovery of this gold vein not to be the detonator which set off the gold rush.

Immediately, numerous companies, from large ones with 150 or more stockholders, to small ones with just over a dozen stockholders, were established to carry out gold mining as a business. All these companies chartered ships and went off to California. A total of 775 ships were hired in eastern cities, and all these ships were packed with their dreaming of making a fortune at one stroke. There were also nearly a hundred thousand people who travelled overland to California. The travelling expense was cheaper than the sea voyage, but the suffering involved in crossing Death Valley and the Sierra Nevada mountains was far beyond imagination. It was possible to make a detour southward and go through Texas or Arizona instead of taking the route across the Sierra Nevada, but this made the 3,000 miles long journey.

In various ways, over 130,000 people arrived in California in only 1849. These are the so-called "Forty-Niners." The population of California at that time was less than 10,000. This population increased over 13 times in just one year, and this had doubled again two years later, to 260,000.

**THE TRANS-CONTINENTAL RAILWAY AND THE RISE OF "THE BIG FOUR"**

With more than 200,000 people rushing in, looking for gold, even the vast huge gold vein which spread toward the east side of the Sierra Nevada mountains, could not make all of them satisfied. In 1848 it was possible for one person to collect a pound of gold per day, but, 2 years later, prospectors were able to collect a mere 5 dollars worth, so not many became wealthy. The most successful were the suppliers of goods to the prospectors, taking advantage of the gold rush boom.

Charles Crocker was one of these suppliers. He started a cartage business to carry food and materials and equipment for mining, from Sacramento to the mining camps in the mountains. When he had saved enough, he opened a grocery in Sacramento, and also joined the Republican Party.

Cora Huntington also became a merchant in Sacramento, handling gold-mining tools for the "Forty-Niners." Mark Hopkins, Huntington's partner, was also the founder of a blanket storage business. Both were also Republicans.