

## TULANE HOTEL

The northeast corner of Church Street at Eighth Avenue has long been known as the Tulane Corner. Although the old hotel from which it took its name has been replaced by a parking lot, this name from a bygone era will remain for years to come in the minds of our older citizens.

The Tulane Hotel was originally known as The Nicholas House, having taken its name from I. C. Nicholas, the gentleman who first opened it to the public around 1864. The Nicholas House was a small hotel containing from sixty to seventy-five rooms. It was a fancy structure which sat far back from the street with an ornamental iron fence across the front.

In the latter part of the Nineteenth Century, the Nicholas House was sold to the Tulane interests. Lewis Bates, a New York druggist and a nephew of Tulane's, decided to expand the structure and rename it for his uncle. From a small hotel it grew to a two hundred and twenty-five room structure. The remodeling which followed the French influence was completed in 1896. At that time it became known as the Tulane Hotel and remained a landmark until it was torn down in 1956 by the National Life and Accident Insurance Company who had purchased it for \$850,000.

In its heyday many famous people were entertained at the Tulane. Among them were Cordell Hull, Governor McMillan, Judge A. B. Neal, Congressman Joe Byrns and John Wesley Gaines. The Tulane served as political headquarters at election time for many years and its guest list reads like a Who's Who of politicians.

The history of the old hotel has a romantic twist, too. Close by was the old Ward's School, an exclusive school for young ladies. It has been said that the Tulane lobby was the favorite gathering place for the young gallants of the city so they could watch the young ladies at their exercises.

The Tulane was never particularly noted for its food. The fare was simple specializing in Country Ham and Buttermilk Biscuits. On December 13, 1897, the American Federation of Labor met at the Tulane for a banquet. They were served barbecued young shooat and spring lamb.

On November 5, 1956, the Nashville Banner carried an editorial by Houston Bond who was at one time an elevator operator at the Tulane. Mr. Bond says, "The Tulane changed hands several times, and there were politicians, traveling salesmen, show girls from the old Princess Vaudeville, dignitaries, a few criminals hiding from the law, a suicide or so; the Tulane got them all."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bond, Houston, Nashville Banner, Nashville, Tennessee.  
November 5, 1956.

## MAXWELL HOUSE

Legend has it that in 1855 Col. John Overton was entering an auction which he thought involved the sale of a cow. The Colonel bid fifteen dollars. Thus the land upon which the Maxwell House stands was sold. For the Colonel erringly believed he had bought a cow when he had really bought the land. Soon the Colonel began building his hotel but operations ceased during the Civil War--at which time the half-constructed hotel was used as a hospital and headquarters for Federal troops. It was then known as the Zollicoffer Barracks. From this unusual beginning was born Nashville's first large and nationally publicized hotel. It was completed in 1869. Since then the amazing growth of Nashville's hostelry has played an important part in the progress of Nashville and hundreds of travelers each day enjoy old time southern comfort plus every modern convenience in more than ten hotels.<sup>1</sup>

The local institution that ties in present day Nashville most closely with the War Between the States is the Maxwell House, a hotel better known by the coffee of the same name. Joel O. Cheek, a local man, originated the blend, and named it Maxwell House after that hotel agreed to buy a year's supply in advance. Years later, when President Theodore Roosevelt was having breakfast there, Cheek, who was present, inquired how he liked the coffee. Roosevelt is supposed to have replied, "Bully, fine. Good to the last drop," which are now probably the best known words he ever spoke.

Twenty-three years ago the Cheeks sold out to the General Foods for a reported \$40,000,000 thereby establishing probably Nashville's largest private fortune, but the hotel didn't make out so well as the coffee has. The house, which wasn't quite finished when the Civil War began, was used by Union forces as a Confederate hospital-prison. After that it was to become the finest hotel in Tennessee.

Then when the Hermitage Hotel was built early in this century, the Maxwell House declined until it was inhabited mainly by drummers, permanent guests with small incomes, and loafers in the lobby. Some people deplored that, with the immense free national publicity it was getting from General Foods advertising the coffee, the Maxwell House itself was such a dump. Then, five or six years ago, a local real estate man bought the old house and has since been cleaning it up, building baths into the thirty-two-by twenty foot bedrooms, and making restaurants and bars of rooms that had been stored with junk. At the same time he is trying to preserve the atmosphere of the age represented by the hotel's beautiful old English rose wood bedsteads, as tall as a sailing boat, the marble topped tables and bureaus and the old flowered carpets.

High-brow dinner-discussion groups, such as the Round Table, hasn't missed a monthly meeting in the Maxwell House's mirrored and paneled dining room. The Junior League has established headquarters in the house, and activities in the old ballroom have revived with fraternity and sorority dances on most week ends during the season for such things. While the Maxwell House will probably never recapture completely its prestige of the last century, the significant thing is that the old hotel has been renovated at all. That indicates a trend toward something that Nashville has either ignored or resisted in the past, but which places like New Orleans learned about years ago namely, commercializing on local traditions, color, customs, and foods.

The area's most typical dish is hickory-smoked yellow corn fed, two-year-old fried country ham and gravy. Most Middle Tennesseans were raised on ham and gravy, and can scarcely exist without it. But until the last few years practically no local hotel or restaurant had it on the menu. They are featuring ham and gravy now, also the Maxwell House's old hooecakes, apple pie made famous by the old Kallman Restaurant, and Faucon saled, masterpieces of long-gone local

French chef. Local packing houses are now shipping Tennessee country ham and spiced round of beef, another typically Nashville delicacy, to consumers as far away as Iran.<sup>2</sup>

The Maxwell House was under construction when the war broke out and remained unfinished till after the war. In its incompleated condition, it was used as a prison for captured Confederates during the occupation of Nashville. In 1863, one of the temporary wooden stairways gave way under the weight of the prisoners crowding forward during mealtime, and fifty were killed and over one hundred were injured.

The historic Maxwell House hotel had its beginning before the Civil War. When the war broke out it was in a partially completed condition and was used by the Federal troops as a barracks and housed many of the Confederate prisoners.

Before August, 1859, a number of prominent citizens of the city met and appointed John Kirkman and Samuel D. Morgan commissioners to act for those who had subscribed for the hotel to be erected by John Overton, on the corner of Church and Cherry Streets. Ground for the building was broken on August 17, 1859, but it was not until ten years later, September 22, 1869, that it was completed and formally opened to the public as a hotel.

The formal opening was a gala event in the social life of the city. The rotunda was a brilliant scene, with its beautiful columns, bright lights, men milling about on the first floor, and prominent society matrons thronging the mezzanine floor.

Guests took the opportunity to inspect the spacious rooms and elegant furnishings of what was considered one of the finest hotels in the United States. It was compared in size with the hotels of that day; the Metropolitan in New York; the Revere in Boston; the Sherman House in Chicago; the Kennard House in Cleveland; the St. Charles in New Orleans; the Spencer House in Cincinnati, and Bernum's in Baltimore.

The halls and parlors were crowded until a late hour of the evening with visitors, and the billiard room and the bar were crowded with those who desired to inspect and sample the drinks available. The general consensus was one of pride and satisfaction that the city at last had a hotel which would reflect the wealth and progress of Tennessee.

The inauguration banquet was described as "a brilliant carnival of southern hospitality" and "the bright dawning of a new day" in the life of the Athens of the South. Guests who had eaten juicy steaks and fat grouse and sipped champagne from New York to San Francisco declared the Maxwell House "a model of hotel comfort, elegance, luxury and splendor, from the majestic entrance hall to its summit."

The main dining room, like the rest of the hotel, was considered among the finest in the country. It was one hundred and fifty feet long and fifty three feet wide, with direct light from above through stars set in the ceiling, and finished in a bluish grey tint to insure a feeling of coolness. Delicate vines clinging to the panel lines, with medallions filled with fruit and game, made the whole design an execution of artistic good taste. The furniture in the room was of heavy walnut.

Some three hundred and fifty guests sat down to the inaugural banquet. The hotel manager, M. Keon, offered apologies for the following menu.

## MENU

- Soup - Oyster, mock turtle.
- Fish - Baked bass, claret sauce; broiled white, a la maitre D'Hotel.
- Boiled - Beef, leg of mutton, caper sauce; chicken, egg sauce; ham, tongue, round of beef, tomato sauce; bacon and cabbage.
- Roasts - Beef, saddle of southdown mutton, sheep, apple sauce; loin of veal, young pig, stuffed; spring lamb, mint sauce; ham, champagne sauce; stuffed young chicken, sirloin of pork, pickle sauce.
- Game - Mallard duck, orange sauce; prairie grouse, with current jelly; teal duck, poivrade sauce.
- Cold dishes - Roast beef, chicken, veal, lamb, pork, tongue, corned beef, ham, lobster salad a la Russe.
- Entrees - Spring chicken, Sautes aux Champignons, Le Macaroni and Cheese au Gratin, calf's head a la Toulouse, le fillet of beef larded, Madeira sauce; hog's head, a la Charcuttiere; rice cakes, with rum; les cotelettes of veal, a la Singara; brains scrambled, with drawn butter; pork steak, with fried apples; lamb tongue, with fine herbs; stewed giblets, a la Creole; Calves feet, a Loril.
- Vegetables - Mashed potatoes, roasting ears, boiled potatoes, boiled parsnips, onions, cabbage, squash, Lima beans, stewed tomatoes.
- Relishes - Boston pickles, horse radish, chow chow, French mustard, John Bull sauce, Harvey sauce, Anchovy sauce, oyster catsup, walnut catsup, tomato catsup, sliced tomatoes, pepper sauce, Worcestershire sauce.
- Pastry - Citron pudding, brandy sauce; apple pie, lemon pie, wafer jumbles, currant cake, lady cake, vanilla drops, egg kisses, vanilla ice cream.
- Dessert - Peaches, Catawba grapes, pecan nuts, almonds, filberts, English walnuts, apples.

The preparation of such an elaborate menu required adequate facilities, which this kitchen boasted. There was an immense roasting jack, the gridirons upon railways, and huge copper boilers with copper jackets so that they might be heated with steam. Adjoining the kitchen was the carving room, with its long iron tables, supplied with pipes to carry steam to the dishes and keep them hot. The culinary appointments were considered all that liberal expenditure and man's ingenuity could devise.

An innovation in hotel arrangement was the private entrance for ladies on Church Street. Designed by T. M. Brennan, of Nashville, the tri-arch and columns were considered an outstanding example of rare Corinthian beauty. The private entrance led to parlors and drawing rooms decorated in harmonising colors. A single parlor was arranged so that it could be divided to enable different families to entertain their friends in privacy. McClure's Music Store furnished a Dunham piano for the parlor for the convenience of ladies who wished to have music while they chatted or promenaded around the wide halls on the mezzanine floor, overlooking the lobby.

From the first, the Maxwell House was famous for its superb cuisine. A typical Christmas menu, offered in 1879, follows.

TABLE D'NOTE.

Mobile Bay (Plants) Oysters on the Half Shell.

SOUP.

Green Sea Turtle. New Orleans Gumbo.

FISH.

Mackinaw Trout, boiled, Anchovy Sauce.

OYSTERS.

Raw Oysters. Escaloped Oysters. Oysters in Champagne.  
Broiled Oysters. Oysters with Fine Herbs. Stewed Oysters.

HOT RELIEVES.

Turkey, Oyster Sauce. Back Bones and Turnips.  
Leg of Young Lamb au Petit Pois. Venison Chops with Prunes.

HOT ENTREES.

Les Filets de Boeuf, Braises, aux Champignons.  
Salmi of Prairie Grouse, with Spanish Olives.  
Legs of Young Rabbits, Saute, a la Chasseur.  
Hard Shell Crabs, Deviled, Maxwell House Style.  
Charlotte of Apples, a la Parisienne. Sweet Breads, a l'Espagnole.  
Lamb Tongues, with Purée of Green Peas.

COLD SIDE DISHES.

Les Cervelles de Veau, en Demi Deuil. French Mushrooms, en Aspic.  
Boston Baked Pork and Beans. Sliced Boned Capon, Aspic Jelly.

GROSSE PIECES FROIDES. (Ornamented.)

Boned Wild Boar's Head, a la Royale. Lobster Salad, a la Russe.  
Boned Turkeys, Ornamented a la Maxwell House.  
Galantine de Dinde, en Belle Vue.  
Buffalo Tongues, Decorated Bridge Fashion.  
Mayonnaise de Volaille, au Celery. Ham, Decorated with Aspic Jelly  
Aspick of Oysters, a la Francaise. Pate de Foie Gras, a la Strasbourg  
Hart & Hensley's Spiced Round of Beef, en Sockle, Ornamented.

HOT RELISHES.

Gigot d'Agneau, a la Provencale. Rice Croquette, Orange Flavor.  
Les Petite Omelets, a la Parisienne. Small Patties, American Style.

COLD RELISHES.

Cheese. Horse Radish. Celery. Cold Slaw. English Pickles.  
Chow Chow. Spanish Olives. Worcestershire Sauce.  
French Mustard. Hill's Home-made Chow Chow.

ROASTS.

Adam Coe's Knas Beef, with Potato Croquettes.  
Suckling Pig, a l'Anglaise. Loin of Veal, Madeira Sauce.  
Hart & Hensley's (New) C.C.C. Hams, Champagne Sauce.  
Young Capon, Giblet Sauce. Domestic Ducks, with Jelly.  
Saddle of Kentucky South Down Mutton, with Red Currant Jelly.  
Green Goose. Stuffed Young Turkeys.



GAME.

Leg of Cumberland Mountain Black Bear, Sauce Poivrade.  
Tennessee Opossum, Baked with Sweet Potatoes, Old Virginia Style.  
Kentucky 'Coon, Devil's Sauce. Roasted Quail, au Natural.  
Saddle of Minnesota Venison, with Red Currant Jelly.  
Canvas-back and Red-head Ducks. Blue-wing and Wood Ducks.  
Roasted Wild Turkeys, with Cranberry Sauce. Wild Goose.  
Young Prairie Chickens, Broiled, Steward's Sauce.  
Broiled Pheasants, a la Maitre d'Hotel. Roasted Mallard Ducks.

VEGETABLES.

Baked Sweet Potatoes. French Green Peas. Stewed Tomatoes.  
String Beans. Yarmouth Corn. Mashed Irish Potatoes.  
French Asparagus, Butter Sauce.. Oyster Plant. Succotash.

PASTRY.

Mince Pie. New England Pumpkin Pie. Peach Tartlets.

PUDDINGS.

English Plum Pudding, Sherry Wine Sauce. Indian Pudding, Cold Sauce

SMALL PASTRY.

Lady Cake. Wafer Jumbles. Jelly Drops. Yellow Coconut Drops.  
Rosalind Cakes. Sliced Fruit Cake. Pound Cake.

CONFECTIONS.

Peach Candy. Almond Drops. Peppermint Drops. Cream Bonbons.  
English Walnut Bonbons. Gum Drops. Chocolate Caramels.  
Rose Cream Almonds. Candy Mottoes. French Mixed Candies.

ORNAMENTAL PIECES.

Black Cake. Almond Macaroon Pyramid. Fruit Cake.  
Lady Cake. Jelly Cake. Italian Marble Cake.

JELLIES AND CREAMS.

Charlotte Russe. Russian Jelly. Maraschino Jelly.  
English Cream. Apple Brandy Jelly.

FRUITS AND DESSERT.

Malaga Grapes. Almonds. Pecans. English Walnuts. Apples.  
Figs. London Layer Raisins. Oranges in Sherry Wine. Green Gages.  
California Apricots. Pears. Dates. Fine Apples in Champagne.  
Vanilla Ice Cream. Frozen Roman Punch. Bananas.

ENGLISH BREAKFAST TEA.

FRENCH COFFEE.

The above Christmas menu was served from 1:30 to 4:00 p.m., for only seventy-five cents. Those who were in a condition to do so were extended the invitation to return again that evening at 10:00 p.m. and eat as much as they wanted without additional charge.

For several decades the Maxwell House continued to be the center of social functions until decadence set in like a lady grown gracefully old. Recently, under new management, the historic building has been undergoing extensive remodeling in an effort to restore its former beauty and retain its honored traditions.

Truly, as Ben Johnson once said, "There is nothing which has yet been contrived by man, by which so much happiness is produced, as by a good tavern or Inn."

At the conclusion of his speech, 1877, the President (Hayes) returned to the Maxwell House...

A Grand Iris Ball was held at the Maxwell House, April 24, 1941, to mark the formal opening of the famous hotel as a historic shrine. A movement had been started several months before by the Nashville Federation of Women's Clubs to preserve the famed Maxwell House, which had been intimately connected with the social and political history of the city since 1869.

For more than half a century, names of presidents, famous actors and musicians were inscribed on the register of the hotel. Presidents Andrew Johnson, Rutherford B. Hayes, Benjamin Harrison, Grover Cleveland, William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, William H. Taft, and Woodrow Wilson were guests at various times.

Among the famous actors and musicians were Joe Jefferson, Paderewski, Sarah Bernhardt, Buffalo Bill, Annie Oakley, and Ceruso. Other distinguished guests have been Thomas Edison, who was connected with the local office of the Western Union for a time; Henry Ford; Cornelius Vanderbilt; George Westinghouse; E. H. Harriman; William Jennings Bryan; Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, of suffragette fame; Frances E. Willard, founder of the W.C.T.U.; and Jane Adams of Hull House.

To preserve these rich historical associations, the Nashville Federation of Women's Clubs launched a grand Iris Ball to stimulate renewed interest in Nashville's famed institution.

The ballroom of the Maxwell House was decorated for the occasion with spring flowers, and standards filled with lavender and white iris were placed along the wall, intermingled with palms and ferns Paul Whiteman and his orchestra furnished music for dancing, and several hundred members of Nashville society were present.

The ball was opened with a grand march, led by Governor Prentice Cooper and his mother, Mrs. W. P. Cooper.<sup>3</sup>

1 Milestones in the History of Nashville; The American National Bank  
2 Jarman, Rufus, The Cities of America. Saturday Evening Post; Philadelphia, October 27, 1951.  
3. McHaven, Henry, Nashville, Athens of the South. Schoer & Jarvis, Chapel Hill, 1949.