



## History of the Grand

Mr. F.H. Chamberlain built the first Grand Hotel in 1847. It was a long rambling two-story building with 40 rooms. A separate building housed the dining room and kitchen while still another building held the bar named "The Texas" after the state of Texas which, at the time, was separate from the other states.

Guests traveled to the hotel by steamboats and docked at what is now the marina.

During the Civil War, the 21<sup>st</sup> Alabama Regiment camped on the hotel grounds and the hotel was used as a base hospital.

In 1869 a fire broke out destroying the dining room, kitchen, and guestrooms. Approximately 150 guests and their personal belongings were saved along with hotel linen and furniture. However, the names of approximately 300 Union and Confederate Soldiers who died at Point Clear during the Civil War were lost.

In 1871 disaster struck again. This time an explosion occurred as excursionists boarded the steamer "Ocean Wave." Many lives were lost and "The Texas" bar was turned into an emergency hospital.

In the 1870's Captain H.C. Baldwin purchased the hotel and, using some of the old foundations, built the second Grand Hotel at a cost of \$75,000. It was much like the first, except it was 300 feet in length and contained 60 suites. Rumor has it that four trips around the porch would equal a mile.

By 1882 the hotel was kept open during the winter and summer months. Rates were \$2.00 per day, \$10.00 per week, and \$40.00 per month... Quite an extravagant price, wouldn't you think?

In 1893 a hurricane destroyed the dining room and "The Texas" bar. However, both were rebuilt.

In 1901 Major James K. Glennon of Mobile purchased the hotel and The Gunnison House which lay next to it along with 250 acres of land. At one point, L&N Railroad wanted to develop the area as the "Riviera of America" and offered Major Glennon \$90,000 but the major felt it was worth \$100,000. Neither the railroad nor Major Glennon gave in so the railroad turned its attention to the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

The hotel was severely damaged by the hurricanes of 1906 and 1916. Major Glennon was ready to quit but Mrs. Glennon intervened. She put on her straw hat, gathered a work crew, and supervised repairs throughout the winter. The next summer the hotel reopened for business.

In 1939 Mr. E.A. Roberts purchased the hotel. His dream was to have an elaborate resort. Mr. Roberts bought 25 additional parcels of land and along with his architect brother, Mr. J.P. Roberts, the third Grand Hotel began to evolve.

In 1940 the old buildings were demolished and using some old timbers and hard pine flooring, the main building was built. Soon after completion, World War II broke out and due to restrictions on gasoline and tire rationing; it was rumored that the hotel would close.

Mr. Roberts was contacted by Colonel Matthew Thompson of the Army Air Corps and an agreement was reached wherein the hotel would be used as a training base for the duration of the war. As a patriotic gesture and to protect the hardwood floors, none of the soldiers wore combat boots in the