

News from the Inn-Spector



The Eastern Version of the Phoenix Story

Docents in training are given mixed messages with respect to the correct phoenix story as it relates to the Oriental Court and specifically the Ho o Kan. The lecture during the training classes stresses the eastern or oriental version while the training manual relates to the Arabian or often referred to as the Greek version. Although the Arabian version is commonly known in our part of the world it is substantially a different story than the version told in Asia and specifically in China and Japan.

In the Arabian version the single phoenix lives for many years, as few as 500 and as many as thousands. Near the end of its life it ignites its nest and is reduced to ashes. From those ashes a new and young phoenix arises to begin life again.

The Oriental Court includes the Ho o Kan which is translated from Japanese as Hall of the Phoenix. Its origin comes from the name of two Chinese mythological birds that were central figures in ancient cosmology. Sometimes called the Chinese Phoenix or “feng-huang,” it is a symbol of spiritual balance. The Japanese name is “ho-o.” It is one of the most highly revered creatures in Asian tradition. Its appearance is said to indicate some great event, or to bear testimony to the greatness of a ruler. In the Chinese version “feng” is male and “huang” is female. In Japanese “ho” is male and the “o” is female. The “Feng-Huang” and “Ho-o” over the years has been seen as a symbol of power, prosperity, grace, and virtue. The witnessing of the phoenix is regarded as a very good omen and as a symbol of peace returning to a country when troublesome times finally come to an end.

Conclusions:

In keeping with the sense of the Oriental Court it is recommended that the story told by the docents should emphasize the Chinese version and the Japanese name rather than the Arabian version. It would be appropriate to refer to the Western version in contrast to the Asian story but the main emphasis should focus on the Ho o Kan.

Considering the story is about the return from troublesome times it might be fitting to reference the time Duane Roberts purchased the hotel in late 1992 as a return to better times and thus the return of the phoenix.

What should we say??

The origin of the name Ho o Kan is Japanese but refers to the story of the Chinese Phoenix, a symbol of spiritual balance where its appearance indicates a great event, honoring a great leader, or recognition of peace and stable times. It is a story quite different from the Arabian version where a new bird emerges from the ashes of another phoenix. The Mission Inn experienced many years of difficult times until Duane Roberts purchased the property in 1992 which can be characterized as a great event and the start of stable times.