

News from the Inn-Spector



CENTENNIAL GRAND PIANO BY STEINWAY & SONS Mission Inn Hotel & Spa, Riverside, California

The lobby of the Mission Inn Hotel & Spa in Riverside, California is a sight to behold. One walks in to find a bell dated 1247 and claiming to be the oldest dated bell in Christendom. High up on the wall is a painting by artist William Keith who spent many years in the High Sierra with famed naturalist John Muir. Keith went back to his studio in San Francisco to create grand landscape paintings, including "California Alps." The lobby carpet seems to come alive with California Missions. The walls are lined with portraits of Presidents. Stories abound with the tales of President Taft's visit to Riverside, and the chair made for him. There are the portraits of Presidents Teddy Roosevelt and Richard Nixon and stories to tell about the room they shared at different periods of time.

Many people have come to the Mission Inn seeking a place of refuge for the evening or perhaps a donation to a political campaign or how about a beautiful place to get married or just a great place to have dinner.

When one moves through the lobby of the Mission Inn Hotel & Spa there is always one object that catches the eye. One does not even have to be a music lover to find the Grand Piano an interesting object to admire. Docents for years have been telling stories about the Mission Inn's **Centennial Steinway Grand Piano, Serial Number 35,033**. At times some Docents are not totally impressed by all the varied stories that seem to percolate through the training each year. As research has expanded on the history of Mission Inn artifacts some interesting information has come to light.

The Centennial Piano, Serial Number 35,033 was originally sold to a Mr. Sanford in Bridgeport, Connecticut in 1877, and then later returned to Steinway & Sons in New York.

In 1883 The Yellowstone Improvement Co. in Livingston, Montana received on loan a shipment from Steinway & Sons. The shipment contained the Centennial Piano, Serial Number 35,033. The Centennial Piano, Serial Number 35,033 was written off Steinway & Sons books December 31, 1898. It had become lost and disappeared completely!

According to a microfilm copy of Steinway & Sons' records, Serial Number 35,033 was identified as being at the Mission Inn, Riverside, CA on 11/1/1954. The records also indicate that at one time the piano was in Yellowstone. Letters in the Mission Inn Foundation archives written in 1954 substantiate the Steinway records. An appraisal conducted 16 years earlier (in 1938) confirms the piano was in the Music Room. We do not know exactly when or how the Centennial Piano arrived at the Mission Inn.

There was more than one Centennial Grand piano. The Piano at the Mission Inn Hotel & Spa is the 44th Centennial model grand piano built out of a total production of 424 units. Steinway continued to make the Centennial model until 1883.