



BOARDWALK PLAYGROUND

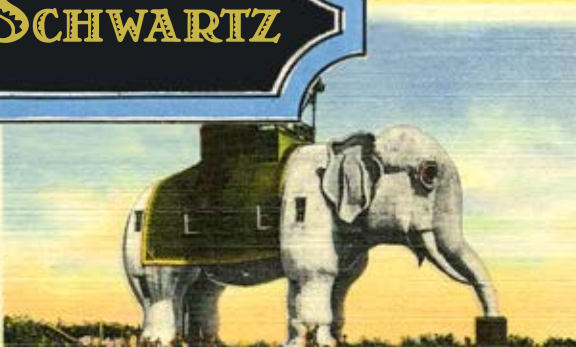
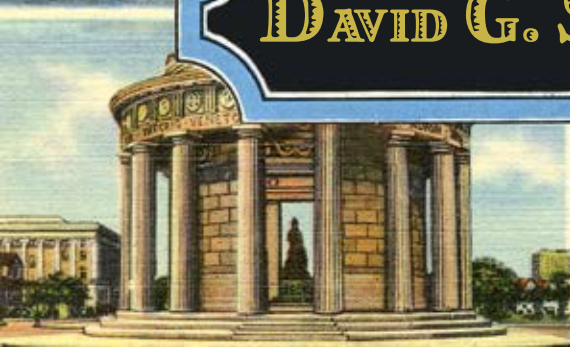
THE MAKING, UNMAKING, &
REMAKING OF ATLANTIC CITY



How the people of a New Jersey resort
built a seaside paradise, lost it, rebuilt a
casino town, mostly lost it, and kept on dreaming



DAVID G. SCHWARTZ





Boardwalk Heavyweight

One of the best-known classic Atlantic City boardwalk hotels, the Traymore, was also one of the earliest. Like most other hotels of the era, it went through several incarnations, and its history parallels that of the resort's hotel industry.

The Traymore began in 1879 as a beachfront, ten-room wooden cottage at Illinois Ave and the "sea end," as beachfront destinations were known in the days when the Boardwalk was laid down only in the summer. Originally a rooming house operated by M.E. Hoopes, the Traymore was named in honor of its steadiest customer, "Uncle Al" Harvey. Harvey incessantly waxed poetic over his Maryland estate, reportedly named after his Irish hometown of Tramore, a small seaside resort in County Waterford on the Emerald Isle's southern coast. To this day, there is a Traymore Lane in Bowie, Maryland.

The first Traymore "hotel" was more of a bath house than a full-service hotel, but it stayed open year-round. "Heated throughout; gas in all the rooms," announced an 1881 advertisement. This structure, though, did not last: on January 10, 1884, a fierce winter storm savaged the Boardwalk and reduced the Traymore to splinters, while the adjacent Park Parlors was left intact. The Traymore was quickly rebuilt and expanded. By 1886, it was a full-blown hotel large enough to host a reception of visiting Washingtonians. It was continually enlarged until, in 1898, it became the city's largest standing hotel, with 450 rooms.

As it stood then, the Traymore had a spacious lawn separating itself from the Boardwalk. This gave guests a pleasant space in which to meander but also served the very practical purpose of allowing a buffer from unfriendly waves. A September 1889 storm that breached

the seawall did not appreciably damage the hotel itself, proving the wisdom of setting back the main building. Open all year round, the Traymore's modern appointments and luxurious rooms attracted visitors even during the slow winter months.

The Traymore continued to grow. In 1906 owner Daniel White hired the firm of Price and McLanahan to construct a new tower that brought the hotel up to the Boardwalk. Yet, for safety reasons and to keep up with the times, more renovations were in order. During the summer of 1914, White contracted with Price and McLanahan to replace the existing wooden-frame Traymore with a massive concrete structure that would rival the Marlborough-Blenheim, which William Price had built across Park Place for White's cousin Josiah.

Unlike later casino hotels that simply plunked down massive towers without regard to the surrounding environs, Price's Traymore, which was built directly behind the 1906 tower, was designed to take advantage of its ocean views: hotel wings jutted out further from the central tower towards Pacific Avenue, thus affording more guests ocean views. Commencing just after Labor Day, construction crews worked non-stop to erect the new Traymore in time for the 1915 season, and they were successful. Built with tan brick and capped by yellow-tiled domes, the Traymore instantly became the city's architectural showpiece when it opened in June 1915.

The hotel was filled immediately, and Daniel White sought to expand. He commissioned a forty-story tower addition which, unfortunately, was not built because of problems securing financing during World War I. If it had been built, this building would have been the tallest structure in Atlantic City until the construction of Revel.

Though the Traymore catered to an upscale clientele, it apparently also accepted less refined guests. In the summer of 1916, two well-dressed women were arrested for pilfering over \$500 worth of hotel property, chiefly linens and bath towels. After hotel managers noticed that a number of items had disappeared, they alerted a detective, who arrested the pair just as they were checking out. Also during that summer, the Secret Service was put on the trail of a male guest who was passing forged checks in the name of a bank vice president.

Still, the Traymore prospered, and was described in 1924 as "the Taj Mahal of Atlantic City," decades before Donald Trump opened a casino resort with that name. In these years, the Traymore was one of the busiest hotels of the city.

But as Atlantic City declined after World War II, the Traymore did as well, though it promoted itself as “the fun-filled Traymore,” offering package vacations with dancing in the Submarine room, free child care, and dinners at local restaurants. In the late 1960s, new owners the Loews Corporation built a 60,000-foot convention center at the property in an attempt to maintain its business.

That campaign was fruitless. In 1971, Loews closed the Traymore, citing monthly losses of \$18,000. In December, the hotel’s contents were disposed of in a liquidation sale.

In April and May of 1972, the Traymore was demolished in a massive, three-phase series of blasts. Even in its destruction, the Traymore was outstanding. To this day, the once-famous Atlantic City hotel still holds the Guinness World Record for largest controlled demolition—with a capacity of nearly 6.5 million cubic feet, the Traymore is the largest (though not highest) structure yet demolished.

Destroyed before the passage of casino gaming gave many old hotels a second chance, the Traymore’s site remained unbuilt throughout the casino era, despite several proposed resorts. It remains a prime site for development. But even if nothing ever rises again from the Traymore site, its place in history is secure.