

THE HOTEL MARTIN



Hotel Martin, once the Holleran House (1893-1901), is shown in the above photo. The Holleran House name can be seen on the left side above the window.

By Barbara Mask

The hotel business in Fulton has an interesting history. The Hotel Martin, the one with the longest history, received a major rebuilding and modernizing in 1910 and that set its course for success for another century.

Our focus is on the one hotel that originated in 1854 that still is located in the same place and continues to provide lodging; currently as an apartment building owned by Travis Flatten. It was built by Bradstreet Robinson (who will be featured in a future article). Known as the Robinson House until 1885, then the Holleran House until 1893, then the Hotel Noble in 1901, and most widely known as the Hotel Martin at 201 11th Avenue. Major changes occurred in 1910 to meet the growing demands of the economic boom in Fulton.

Henry H. Martin, proprietor of the popular hotel, changed the name from Hotel Noble to Hotel Martin on August 30, 1910. The structure was rebuilt at that time refitted with twenty-three rooms. A quote from the Fulton Journal, "It will be an attractive building with its bungalow style of room with eight dormer windows, and a spacious veranda on the south side." The cost of rebuilding and new furnishings was over \$7,000. "Fulton will have a first-class hotel," according to the Journal. "There will be no cause on that score for a removal of the head office of the Mystic Workers from this city." The Mystic Workers, later named the Fidelity Life Association, voted to keep their home office in Fulton in 1901, but years of delay by other communities who wanted the office located in their cities was a constant concern in Fulton. The home office building (recently donated to the City of Fulton) was eventually built in 1913 at 100 10th Avenue and across the street from the Hotel Martin. Monthly board meetings brought in a large delegation of visitors.

Other frequent guests were railroad passengers who were boarding steamboats from Fulton with their destinations to visit the 'Saints' — St Paul to the north and St. Louis to the south. Many railroad executives provided a steady customer base, too.

THE SAGA OF THE DEMENT HOUSE

The most famous, but short lived, hotel in Fulton was built in 1855 by Charles Dement. It was a luxurious one with lavish furnishings. Standing four stories high, it was located at the present site of the Fulton Post Office. Dement was planning for an influx of people when it appeared the railroad would have Fulton become its terminus, however, the Chicago &



1910: Henry H. Martin rebuilds the hotel to meet the growing demands of travelers into Fulton.

& Northwestern Railroad Company's decision was to choose Clinton as its connection for the western migration. The Robinson House, built at the same time, enjoyed a prosperous and successful business. That business site continued as a hotel until it became an apartment building. The Robinsons had a famous reputation for catering to the care and comfort of their guests. The Dement House filed bankruptcy in 1858 and the structure was used for a variety of enterprises; most notably the Northern Illinois College.

There was a lot of interest in the improvements to the Hotel Martin. On October 30, 1910, the Journal gave this update. "Three of the outer sides of the Hotel Martin are now covered with the final coat of concrete, known as pebble splash. This work has been done by Ernest Husman and it presents a unique and pleasing appearance. It will require a month or more before the building will be completed."

This writer was a guest at the Hotel Martin at the age of five. My parents lived in Chicago and we three came out to look at greenhouses that were for sale. (My brothers were in school). I vividly recall 'Dodo.' He was a beautiful and talkative parrot. Researching for this article, it was written that Dodo was a gift to Mrs. Martin in 1907 and he lived in the hotel lounge until his death in 1964.

With the donation of their home by Maxine and Leonard Martin at 707 10th Avenue, which has become a public venue, there continues to be some confusion of people who recall and remember the Martin Hotel; although its official name was Hotel Martin.