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William Luther / San Antonio Express-News

Just like Teddy Roosevelt remembered the Maine, the Menger Bar remembers its ties to the Rough Rider.

Teddy Roosevelt made headlines on visits to S.A.

TV documentary ignores Alamo City's role in story

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Teddy Roosevelt's long-awaited arrival in May 1898 at the San Antonio camp where his Rough Riders were training to fight in the Spanish-American War was treated by local newspapers as if he were royalty.

For more than a week prior to the future president's arrival, the papers had breathlessly chronicled the doings of the adventure-seeking men who'd come from Arizona, Oklahoma and other states and territories to serve as Rough Riders. There were stories of pick-up baseball games, of men breaking wild horses, of the young mountain lion captured in Arizona and adopted as a mascot.



San Antonio Daily Express / File photo

Roosevelt works at a desk inside his tent during the training of the Rough Riders in San Antonio.

Teddy continues on A8



Roosevelt and two of his Rough Riders pay a mounted call on Mission Concepción during the training period.

Institute of Texan Cultures / Courtesy photo

"The Menger Hotel" but, it's also the hotel that honors Teddy Roosevelt and many other American Presidents and celebrities over the years. The Historic 1859 Menger Hotel in San Antonio will be the historical meeting site of our 2015 Annual Conference! Come join us at the Menger Hotel and it's wonderful sites and historical significance.

MENGER HOTEL HISTORY!

MENGER HOTEL. The Menger Hotel, one of the state's oldest and best-known hotels, was opened by William Menger on Alamo Square in San Antonio on January 31, 1859. Menger, a German immigrant, had arrived in San Antonio in the early 1840s and operated a brewery at the site with Charles Phillip Degen. In 1857 he and his wife decided to expand their boardinghouse. Local architect John M. Fries is credited with designing the two-story cut-stone building, which features classical detail; John Hermann Kampmann oversaw construction of the project. The foundations were laid on June 18, 1858, and work was completed by the end of January 1859. The hotel was so successful that Menger immediately made plans to build an addition between the hotel and his brewery. Construction on a forty-room annex was begun in August 1858 and completed the following year. The hotel featured a tunnel opening off the basement, through which Menger led groups of selected guests on tours of the adjacent brewery. Menger died at the hotel in March 1871, and his widow and son took over the management. When the Civil War and Reconstruction were over, and especially after the railroad arrived in 1877, the Menger became the best-known hotel in the Southwest. It was praised for the cuisine offered in the Colonial Dining Room. Specialties included wild game, mango ice cream, and snapper soup made from turtles caught in the San Antonio River.

An east wing was added in December 1881. Hermann Kampmann became manager in 1887 and supervised the installation of a new bar, a replica of the taproom in the House of Lords Club in London. The solid cherry bar, cherry-paneled ceiling, French mirrors, and gold-plated spittoons were the marvels of San Antonio. The beer, chilled by the Alamo Madre ditch, which passed through the hotel courtyard, mint juleps served in solid silver tumblers, and hot rum toddies came to have wide renown. Theodore Roosevelt first visited the Menger in 1892 on a javelina hunt; he returned to recruit his Rough Riders (the First United States Volunteer Cavalry) at the hotel in 1898; in 1905 he was back for a banquet. In 1909 the hotel was again enlarged with an addition to the south side. Architect Alfred Giles altered the main façade, adding Renaissance Revival details in stuccoed brick, pressed metal, and cast iron; he also designed an interior rotunda that provided light and served as a circulation hub. The hotel was a center of San Antonio social affairs and a meeting place for visiting celebrities. In 1976 the hotel was added to the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Alamo Plaza Historic District. The Menger was later renovated into a hotel of size and modern conveniences.