



# The Mission Inn Hotel Architecture Series

## The International Rotunda Wing: Ceramic Tiles

### HISTORY

#### *The Last Wing of the Inn*

The International Rotunda Wing was designed by the architectural firm G. Stanley Wilson during the Mission Revival era. Completed in 1931, it was the last wing of the hotel, finished 4 years before Frank Miller died.

It stands “six stories high, 33 feet across at the widest point”<sup>1</sup>. It hosts a spiral staircase with 134 steps. The Rotunda is “open to the elements” and allows fresh air and the occasional rainfall to enter the wing.

#### *Spaces in the Wing*

The wing features several popular parts of the hotel including the St. Francis Chapel and the Famous Fliers’ Wall, the Galleria, Oriental Court, the Ho O Kan, and the Garden of the Sky. The wing officially opened in 1932 and held offices for local businesses, including “lawyers, doctors, a radio station and a painter’s studio”<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Mission Inn Foundation. *The Mission Inn International Rotunda: A History of the International Tiles and Iron Initials*. California: Mission Inn Foundation. 2015, p. 1

<sup>2</sup> Mission Inn Foundation. 2015, p. 1



Eleven guest rooms are housed at the top and “are some of the most luxurious guest accommodations”<sup>3</sup>. This includes the “Keeper of the Inn Suite” used by the current owners Mr. and Mrs. Roberts. In the past, the suite has been used as a congressional office for “the late representative George E. Brown Jr.”<sup>4</sup>

### *Ceramic Tiles*

Aside from its unique architectural design, the Rotunda Wing hosts a variety of unique elements including 49 unique ceramic tiles.

Most of the tiles represent different countries, by displaying the country’s coat of arms. Others are awards given to Frank Miller. Two tiles honor industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie and explorer Juan Bautista de Anza. Frank Miller considered them to be individuals who have greatly contributed to society.<sup>5</sup>

Twenty-seven of the 32 countries included were members of the League of Nations, created in 1920 and disbanded in 1946. The other three nations included but not in the League of Nations were the United States, San Marino, and Malta.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Mission Inn Foundation. 2015, p. 1

<sup>4</sup> Mission Inn Foundation. 2015, p. 1

<sup>5</sup> Mission Inn Foundation. 2015, p. 11

<sup>6</sup> Mission Inn Foundation. 2015, p. 11



Today, there are 32 countries represented in the tiles. Japan, Mexico, and the United States are represented twice.<sup>7</sup>

One suggestion for the tiles' inclusion was because “Frank Miller was a pacifist and hosted many peace conferences at the Mission Inn”.<sup>8</sup> He focused on working towards a peaceful world and he was honored with two distinguished awards. First, the “*Ordre des Palmes Académiques*” (Order of Academic Palms), “represents a French decoration for academic, cultural, and educational figures”<sup>9</sup>. Second, the *4<sup>th</sup> Degree of the Order of the Rising Sun*, which was given to Frank Miller by the Japanese Emperor Hirohito in 1929.

**Fun Fact:** The Mission Inn Foundation and Museum is currently working on an exhibition that will explore Frank Miller and his impact on peace. This exhibit is set to open in 2020.

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<sup>7</sup> Mission Inn Foundation. 2015, p. 11

<sup>8</sup> Mission Inn Foundation. 2015, p. 11

<sup>9</sup> Mission Inn Foundation. 2015, p. 11



## *Tiles by Floor*

<b>Row Above the 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor</b>	<b>Above the Second Floor</b>	<b>Above the First Floor</b>	<b>Above the Main Floor</b>	<b>Fountain Level</b>
Greece	Costa Rica	Spain	United States of America	United States of America
Norway	Chile	Order of the Rising Sun (4 <sup>th</sup> Class)	Coat of Arms, Japan	Mexico
Cuba	Bolivia	Germany	Coat of Arms, Canada	Unknown
Switzerland	Argentina	Brazil	Salvador	De Anza
De Anza	Paraguay	Mission Inn Escutcheon	Italy	Unknown
Japan	Liberia	Peru	Belgium	Unknown
Sweden	Carnegie	Order of the Palms	Pope Pius IX	Unknown
Netherlands	Venezuela		Spain Arms of the Spanish Monarch – Charles II of Spain	Unknown
Mexico	Dominican Republic		Emblem of France	Unknown
San Marino	Nicaragua		Malta	
Denmark	Colombia			



## ACTIVITY

Today we are going to create our own Mission Inn tile to place on our wall at home!

### Materials:

- 1 sheet of blank paper
- Crayons/markers
- Scissors
- Glue and 10 (larger) Craft Sticks (Optional)

### Directions:

1. Print template on paper.
2. Decorate Tile.
3. Cut out the tile template.
4. Grab 2 craft sticks and cut the rounds off the edges.
5. Place 8 craft sticks laying vertical next to each other.
6. Glue 2 additional craft sticks horizontally across the 8 craft sticks. Be sure to place the 2 craft sticks at the top and bottom of the other craft sticks. – Let Dry.
7. Grab the decorated tile cut-out and glue it to the 8 craft sticks, on the side without the 2 craft sticks.
8. Share your tile with us!





## Mission Inn Tile Template

THE MISSION INN



## Content Resources

If you are interested in learning more history about the International Rotunda and the ceramic tiles, check out the resources below.

Mission Inn Foundation. *The Mission Inn International Rotunda: A History of the International Tiles and Iron Initials*. California: Mission Inn Foundation, 2015.

Friends of the Mission Inn. *Historic: Mission Inn*. California: Friends of the Mission Inn, 1998.