



the sofia hotel

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Located at the intersection of travel and commerce.

SOFIA'S HISTORY: Because San Diego is located at the southern most point of California surrounded by mountains, the border and the ocean; transportation to, from and within the region has always been a determinant factor in its development. Nineteenth-century attempts to bring rail and other means of transportation were not successful, but the arrival of the automobile would reshape transportation options.

The Pickwick Corporation, through its subsidiary companies, owned and operated 22 stage routes in California; many of these routes being operated with exclusive franchise or operative rights. Eventually, this system became one of the three major stage lines in the United States, and the corporation also opened numerous hotels throughout the country including San Francisco, Kansas City, Birmingham and New York. The Pickwick Hotel is significant for its association with the Pickwick Corporation which began as a pioneering stage line and grew to include Pickwick Airlines, Pickwick Nightcoaches, Pickwick Broadcasting, Pickwick Motor Coach Works, Golden State Hotel Company and Pickwick Hotels.



**SOFIA:
A HISTORY**

1915 San Diego-based stagecoach company Limited Imperial Valley Stage Line changes its name to the Pickwick Stage Lines and moves its station to the lobby of the old Pickwick Theater on the east side of Fourth Street, north of Broadway.

1922 After the introduction of the Model T Ford automobile limits traditional horse-based coach travel, the owners of the Pickwick Stage Line sell the business to new owners who retain the Pickwick name for the combined system.

1926 The Pickwick Corporation expands into the hotel business and opens its first hotel in downtown San Francisco near Union Square. The hotel, still in operation today, is hailed as a classic example of Neo-Gothic architecture and later featured prominently in Dashiell Hammett's popular mystery novel, "The Maltese Falcon."

1927 Another Pickwick Hotel opens its doors in San Diego at First and Broadway in May 1927. With two towers and Neo Gothic styling, the two-tower motor hotel is regarded as one of the most luxurious hotels in the city at the time. The first hotel in San Diego to be built with "en suite" bathrooms, its marketing slogan was "A Room and a Bath for Two and a Half."

1928 Two additional hotel towers open to the public, completing the 230-room Pickwick Hotel San Diego. This same year, the Pickwick Corporation buys San Diego radio station KFBC and forms the Pickwick Broadcasting Corporation. George Bowles is installed as Vice President and Manager of the station and the call letters are changed to KGB to reflect his name. Studios and transmitters were moved to the Pickwick Terminal Hotel Building at the corner of First and Broadway, where the station remained until 1944. Twin radio towers are constructed on top of the two outside towers.

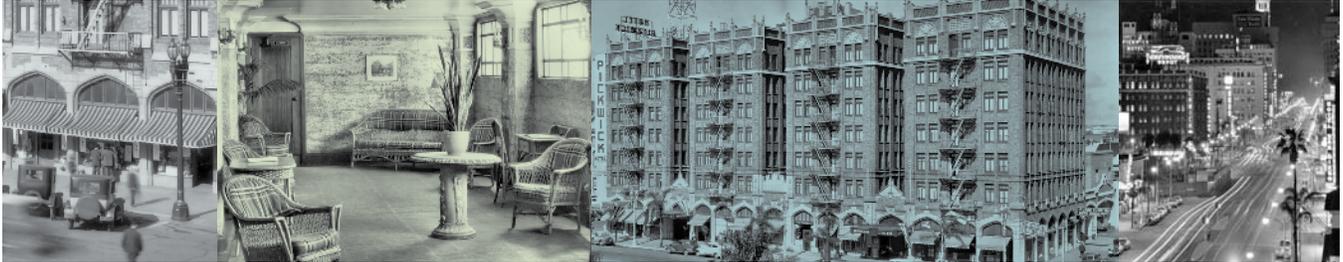
1929 Pickwick Stages officially merged with Greyhound, as did other lines, to form the Greyhound Corporation.

Early 1930s Under the Pickwick ownership, the station used a variety of slogans to promote their identity. Among those KGB uses during this time were "The Voice of Sunny San Diego." Pickwick Broadcasting Corporation later forms a three-station chain including KNRC in Los Angeles and KTAB in San Francisco.

1933 Lincoln Dellar becomes station manager of KGB, and during his tenure, the staff included neophyte broadcaster, Arthur Gordon Linkletter. Linkletter was first an announcer in 1933, while he was still a student at SDSU. At KGB, Art Linkletter originated the "Man on the Street" shows, which, according to the Journal of San Diego History, "began the deluge of audience participation shows of all kinds-quiz, stunt, and talk."

1935 Linkletter becomes program director of KGB.

1936 Linkletter becomes station manager. At this time the station was, according to the Journal of San Diego History, "on the first two floors of the Pickwick Hotel, entering from the side street off Broadway to the reception and business office, then upstairs to a large broadcast studio and compact announcer's booth."



**SOFIA:
A HISTORY**

Late 1930s In a bid to become the premier radio station for invalids and shut-ins, "Music for the Sick," is broadcast. Shows in later years included a popular program for the physically disabled and a program broadcast entirely by blind persons reading from a Braille script.

1944 KGB moves its station to 1017 First Avenue after 16 years at the Pickwick Hotel.

1940s The Pickwick Hotel remains a popular tourist hotel and nightspot, with the Piccadilly Lounge popular among guests and residents alike.

1950s Downtown is changing and the bus operation expands to occupy both ground floor corners of The Pickwick Hotel. Also at this time, the San Diego City Council required that decorative architectural elements be removed from all buildings to prevent potential injury and casualty during an earthquake. But the building retains sufficient historic fabric to embody the distinctive characteristics of its Gothic Revival style of architecture and survives to be the only public building of its style remaining in San Diego.

1956-1986 Downtown San Diego is losing its popularity as a retail and entertainment destination as these types of venues begin to move elsewhere in the city. Under a new operator with a 30-year lease, The Pickwick Hotel begins to show signs of age.

1986 Ken Winslow and Harki Parekh, co-general partners of Pickwick Partners, Ltd., purchase The Pickwick Hotel and their partnership assumes management of the property.

1986-2000 Pickwick Partners, Ltd. systematically undertakes renovations of the property to slowly bring the hotel back into repair. The process takes years as hotel earnings are funneled back into the property.

2000-2004 San Diego Padres' Petco Park, is excavated, constructed, and opened; and thousands of residential condominiums are built, sold and occupied ushering in a boom of downtown revitalization. Retailers, restaurateurs and commercial builders pour back into downtown neighborhoods, bringing an exciting period of much-needed stabilization to downtown San Diego.

2005 After 20 years of ownership, Pickwick Partners sees the right opportunity to renovate the hotel, which inevitably contributes to the revitalization of downtown's West End neighborhood. With the hotel's distinctly urban configuration and a growing appreciation in hospitality for chic boutique properties and individually tailored guest services, the hotel's owners begin a major \$16 million renovation.

2006 On January 16 renovations begin and the Pickwick Hotel closes. A grand re-opening is planned for December 2006 as The Sofia Hotel.

2007 The Sofia Hotel is recognized as a member of the National Trust Historical Hotels of America. For more information about the HHA please visit www.historichotels.org

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