

= Cal Neva Lodge & Casino =

Cal Neva Resort & Casino , previously known as the Calneva Resort , is a resort and casino straddling the border between Nevada and California on the shores of Lake Tahoe . The original building was constructed in 1926 , and became famous when the national media picked up a story about actress Clara Bow cancelling checks she owed to the Cal Neva worth \$ 13 @, @ 000 in 1930 . After a fire , the building burnt down in 1937 and was rebuilt over the course of 30 days . In 1960 , entertainer Frank Sinatra purchased the Resort alongside Dean Martin and Chicago mobster Sam Giancana .

Under Sinatra , the Celebrity Room was added alongside a helipad and it opened year round . His ownership gradually increased over the following two years until he owned 50 percent outright . But Giancana 's attendance at the property first provoked a rift between Sinatra and share holder Hank Sanicola , and later resulted in Sinatra 's gambling license being suspended by the Nevada Gaming Control Board . He initially leased the property to Jack L. Warner and later in 1968 to a group of investors . It passed through the hands of a series of investment groups until 1976 when it was bought by Kirk Kerkorian . The property is owned by Criswell @-@ Radovan , LLC , which closed the resort on September 5 , 2013 , for renovations and anticipates reopening it in 2016 .

= = History = =

= = = Early period = = =

The Calneva Lodge was built in 1926 by real estate developer Robert P. Sherman . In 1929 , Canadian Army Colonel H. H. Betts went missing from his room at the Calneva ; his body was found over a year later some five miles away from the hotel . The lodge was first made nationally famous later that year when actress Clara Bow cancelled checks owed to the casino worth \$ 13 @, @ 000 ; she claimed that she had believed that the chips she was using while playing blackjack were worth 50 cents when they were actually valued at \$ 100 .

A group of investors bought the Calneva in 1935 , and recruited William " Bones " Remmer to act as its president and the pit manager of the casino . That year a 13 @-@ year @-@ old Judy Garland performed at Cal Neva for the first time . The original building burnt down in 1937 causing \$ 200 @, @ 000 worth of damage ; the incident which was thought to have been arson but no charges were ever brought . The reconstruction effort took 30 days , with 500 men working on the project . State legislation was changed shortly afterwards to allow gambling , and following the purchase by developer Norman Blitz it became one of Nevada 's earliest legalized casinos and rumors abounded that there was an intention by the owners of the lodge to put a gambling boat on the lake .

Towards the end of the Second World War , the lodge was purchased from Remmer by Sanford Adler and a group of associates for \$ 700 @, @ 000 ; Adler renamed the property to " Cal Neva " in order to match Adler 's Cal Neva hotel in Reno , Nevada . However , this formatting of the name had been in common use since before the fire . In 1946 , Xavier Cugat was paid a reported \$ 22 @, @ 000 for a two @-@ week stint at Cal Neva Lodge ? this was reportedly the first nationally famous band to perform there .

Ownership was transferred once again on March 21 , 1955 , when a group led by Bert " Wingy " Grober purchased the lodge for \$ 1 million . During this period , the hotel was frequented by members of the Kennedy family including John F. and his brother Robert . Author Scott Lankford claims that John F. used the lodge to carry on an " endless series of extramarital affairs with wealthy divorcees and Tahoe 's notoriously ubiquitous prostitutes " . The lodge served as accommodation during the 1960 Winter Olympics , held at nearby Squaw Valley Ski Resort . It has remained popular with skiers over the decades since .

= = = Ownership by Frank Sinatra = = =

Frank Sinatra first visited Cal Neva in 1951 ; his trip made the national press as he overdosed on sleeping pills and this was reported to the local sheriff . He continued to attend the lodge and Grober would talk up his appearances to other guests such as when on one occasion , Sinatra played a jam session with big band leader Harry James and actress and singer Betty Grable . Sinatra publicly bought the resort in 1960 through his company , Park Lake Enterprises . Initially , he owned 25 percent of the property with Hank Sanicola and Paul " Skinny " D 'Amato who each held 13 percent . Other smaller shareholders included Dean Martin . Chicago mobster Sam Giancana was said to be a silent partner in the business ; D 'Amato acted as Giancana 's man . Sinatra gradually expanded his ownership of the casino ; by 1962 he owned more than 50 percent share , with Sanicola holding 33 percent and Sanford Waterman owning the remaining shares .

The shareholders decided to open the property year @-@ round ; it had only previously opened for the summer season . Sinatra built the Celebrity Room theater and installed a helicopter pad on the roof . He re @-@ utilized prohibition @-@ era smuggling tunnels beneath the property to allow mob members to move around the property without being seen by the public .

The FBI already had the lodge under investigation at the time due to the connection to Joseph P. Kennedy , Sr. , who was staying there at the time that Sinatra 's deal was finalized . There were concerns that Kennedy was involved in the arrangement of a casino for use by the American mafia . The FBI suspected that the expansion was made using funds borrowed from Jimmy Hoffa . Following a request by Robert Kennedy , who had concerns over the press coverage of his and his brother 's relationships with Marilyn Monroe , Sinatra made accommodation available for her for a weekend prior to her death on August 4 , 1962 . During this period she was not allowed to leave and only Giancana was allowed to visit her . Even her former husband , Joe DiMaggio , was turned away . She attempted suicide through an overdose , but contacted the reception desk and was rushed to hospital where she had her stomach pumped . The cabin , known as Monroe 's , and another , known as Sinatra 's , are still part of the guest accommodation . Also in that year , a federal investigation took place into a prostitution ring being run from the foyer of the Cal Neva .

The Sinatra period saw extravagant parties and visits by celebrities such as Lucille Ball and Richard Crenna . However , his mood swings would sometimes determine how he responded to patrons . Journalist Herb Caen reported that he could be dismissive and insulting to those who annoyed him . Giancana was banned from the state of Nevada , but Sinatra continued to allow him to stay at the lodge which resulted in Sanicola seeking to remove himself as a shareholder . Although Sinatra sought to explain that Giancana was only visiting his girlfriend , Phyllis McGuire , the disagreement resulted in the end of Sinatra and Sanicola 's friendship . After Giancana was spotted on the premises , Sinatra had his gambling license removed by the Nevada Gaming Control Board . Following this , Sinatra decided he wanted to get out of entertainment property ownership as he was being heavily criticized in the national press and pursued by law enforcement over illegal activities at the casino . The Cal Neva Lodge was leased to Jack L. Warner in a deal which also saw a majority stake in Reprise Records sold to Warner Bros. Records and Sinatra gaining a one @-@ third ownership in the new company .

= = = Later period = = =

After leasing it to Warner for four years , Sinatra sought to sell the property to Howard Hughes in 1967 as part of the renewal of his contract at the Sands Hotel and Casino . Following a fallout between Hughes and Sinatra , the entertainer instead signed a contract with Caesars Palace . This included a requirement for Sinatra 's stake in Cal Neva to be purchased by his new employer for \$ 2 million , but instead the lodge passed into the hands of the same owners as Reno 's Club Cal @-@ Neva in 1968 for \$ 1 @.@ 4 million .

The new owners oversaw the construction of a ten @-@ storey expansion to the property . This added a further 200 rooms to the lodge , for which permission was given although the Nevada State Park Advisory Committee opposed the move . They sought to re @-@ open the Cal Neva on July 1 , 1969 , but instead it partly opened in May of that year with the new expansion opening the following month . The Ohio Real Estate Investment Trust purchased the lodge in 1970 for \$ 6 million

, with the aim to lease it to the U.S. Capital Corporation , who in turn sought to sublease it to Tahoe Crystal Bay Inc . The stockholders of the Ohio Real Estate Investment Trust filed a lawsuit against the company in 1973 , which resulted in the Cal Neva being placed into federal receivership . After opening year round since Sinatra purchased the lodge , it closed for the winter season in 1974 due to a drop in visitors blamed on the 1973 oil crisis .

The Cal Neva was sold in 1975 alongside the Crystal Bay Club to BKJ Corporation , who consisted of Everett Brunzell , Charles Ketchum and Norman Jenson . The two clubs were purchased for a total of \$ 9 million . But their licensing application for Cal Neva was turned down by the Nevada Gaming Commission due to a their lack of ongoing finances . The First National Bank of Nevada foreclosed on the property in early 1976 before selling it to Kirk Kerkorian , a significant shareholder in Metro @-@ Goldwyn @-@ Mayer . He owned the Cal Neva through his Tracinda Investment Corporation , a different entity than the one through which he owns his MGM shares . As part of the re @-@ launch of the lodge , he convinced Dean Martin to return for a performance , for which Cary Grant was also in attendance .

Jon Perroton was arrested in 1985 for fraud after convincing Hibernia National Bank to loan him \$ 23 million towards the purchase price of Cal Neva . He had claimed that he had the backing of Sheraton Hotels and Resorts . He was subsequently sentenced to 20 years in custody . That same year , the lodge was purchased by Chuck Bleuth . Under the new owner , it was renovated and the exterior of the main building restored to how it looked in the 1960s . On September 10 ? 12 , 1993 , the lodge hosted the second annual Daow Aga Pow wow ( a local Native American meeting ) on Lake Tahoe . In 1998 the hotel was named " Nevada 's Best Getaway " and cited as one of America 's 50 Flagship Hotels .

In 2005 , Bleuth sold the lodge onto Ezri Namvar . However the casino was in severe decline ; by 2009 the revenue was around half of that which it received in 1992 . Canyon Capital Advisors foreclosed on a \$ 25 million loan , and an auction open across two states failed to result in any bidders . The area had seen several other casinos nearby close around the same time .

= = Architecture and location = =

The Cal Neva Lodge and Casino overlooks Lake Tahoe with the property split across the California / Nevada border near Crystal Bay . The main dining room has a white line indicating the state border running down the middle of the room , and continues outside through a swimming pool . The interior is decorated in the lodge @-@ style . The entrance had been replaced several times over the years , although the exterior of the buildings have remained almost the same since the reconstruction . Prior to the expansion under Sinatra , the lodge had 55 rooms and 11 lodges , but this was increased to 220 lake @-@ facing rooms following the expansion in 1969 . As of 1998 it had 182 rooms and suites and eight conference rooms , catering for up to 400 people .

= = = Celebrity and Indian rooms = = =

Constructed following the purchase by Sinatra and his associates , the Celebrity room and theater hosted both the singer and his Rat Pack friends as well as other singers of the day . It is located near to the casino area on the Nevada side of the border , and has sat up to 700 people . The Indian room featured Native American memorabilia and wood @-@ beamed ceilings , and is sited in the California side of the hotel . It acted as both a museum to the nearby Washoe people , as well as operating as a ballroom . The Indian room underwent renovation in the late 1980s , when it was described by Skiing magazine as being " a spacious area with a large fireplace " .

= = = Current renovations = = =

Criswell @-@ Radovan , LLC , a Napa , California @-@ based development company which acquired the property in spring 2013 , closed it as a whole on September 5 , 2013 for a complete renovation . The development project was originally estimated to take at least a year and was to

include an overhaul of the 10 @-@ story Cal Neva , including interior guest rooms , the Circle Bar , the casino , Frank Sinatra 's Celebrity Room theater and a complete exterior upgrade . The casino upgrade sought to restore the Cal Neva 's original 6 @,@ 000 @-@ square @-@ foot gaming floor , complete with a full slot machine display and the return of table games . Criswell @-@ Radovan was aiming to reopen the property in conjunction with what would have been Sinatra 's 99th birthday on December 12 , 2014 . However , reopening was first delayed to January 2015 , then summer 2015 , and then pushed into 2016 . They delays were attributed to a combination of factors : the need for construction to proceed carefully and the difficulties in obtaining financing . The company obtained a \$ 29 million loan in November 2014 that allowed construction to begin . An additional \$ 20 million equity line of credit is also financing the project .