

Brief History of the Columbia Club

(by John Walsh, February, 2006)

On February 13, 1889, the Columbia Club was founded by a group of young men who a year earlier had promoted the candidacy of Benjamin Harrison for president of the United States. After Harrison's election as the nation's 23rd president (and the only Hoosier to hold that office), the group decided to form a private club, and secure a clubhouse in downtown Indianapolis.

First known as the "Harrison Marching Society," the club later adopted "Columbia" after the then popular patriotic symbol of the country, and called their club The Columbia Club.

The present clubhouse on Monument Circle is the third on this same site and was dedicated in 1925. The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places in the United States.

Membership in the Columbia Club experienced rapid growth through the years and today totals about 2,200, including men and women, and those of various political persuasion.

The Columbia Club is a private, member-owned club with members paying an initiation fee to join, and then monthly dues based upon their age and place of residence and work. For example, a Resident Member, one who lives and works in Marion and the surrounding counties, pays a one-time initiation fee of \$3,000, and monthly dues of \$155.00. These rates are subject to change by the board of directors.

Club policy is set by a 12-member board of directors, elected by the membership. The board is composed of Club members who serve without pay. Day to day management is the responsibility of a general manager who supervises a management staff of 16 people. In total, the Club has about 150 full and part-time staff members.

The board of directors also appoints a number of standing committees, composed of Club members who advise the management staff.

The Columbia Club is one of the premier private "city clubs" in the country. The Club has excellent facilities, including overnight guest rooms and suites, four restaurants and lounges, a fitness center, meeting and conference rooms, a business center, billiards room, library, barber shop and a spacious Grand Lobby. The Club also has a wide range of programs and special events for members and their guests.

The Club has reciprocal agreements with more than 200 other private clubs in this country and abroad allowing their members to use our Club, and our members to use their clubs.

Our Number One mission, at present and for the past 117 years, is to serve our members and their guests in a skilled and highly professional manner. Our jobs depend upon our Club's continued member support for without them there would be no Columbia Club. We can be proud to work at the Columbia Club and to perpetuate our long history of service to our community.

