

THE HISTORIC STRATER HOTEL PRESENTS:

ROOM 414: CHARLES E. STILWELL

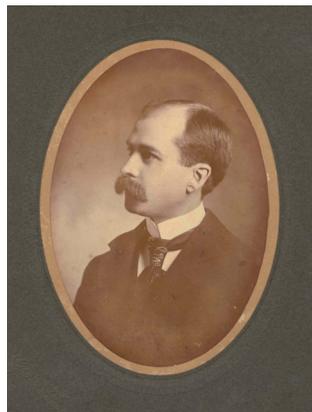
EARLY STRATER MANAGER, BOARD OF TRADE DIRECTOR, BANK PRESIDENT
**THIS ROOM CONTAINS THE ORIGINAL BEDROOM FURNITURE OF CHARLES STILWELL;
ACQUIRED FROM HIS FAMILY AND USED IN TRIBUTE TO HIM**

HIS EARLY INFLUENCE AT THE STRATER

Charles Stilwell was born in Champaign County, IL on March 10, 1868. He moved to Kansas at a very young age and eventually made his way to Seattle in his teens. There he learned the hotel and restaurant business. In 1892 he made his way to Creede, Colorado, where he worked in a saloon owned by Bob Ford, a member of Jesse James' gang who had betrayed and shot James for the reward. When Ford was murdered in his saloon in retaliation, Charley's employment in Creede ended and he headed out for Silverton on foot—60 miles over the mountains. From there he found a ride to Durango where he again became

involved in the restaurant business. In 1896 he became manager of the Strater, continuing in that role until 1922. He installed the first "sewer" system in Durango in the hotel. It consisted of wooden pipes buried alongside the railroad tracks behind the hotel that led directly to the Animas River where the raw sewage was emptied.

In 1923 Charley became president of the Burns National Bank. His signature was printed on currency from the bank which was permitted by the government at that time. He was also a director of the Board of Trade and a Durango Democratic Party Delegate.



Charley loved automobiles and once drove his Studebaker to Denver to trade for a new Commonwealth touring car, touted as "the car with a foundation" referencing the build quality which included frames lined with thick felt.

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Charley insisted that male guests wear a coat while eating meals in the dining room.
- On January 19, 1902, the Durango Democrat ran an item that said "Think of W.G. White and Charley Stilwell in New York! Say, fellers, there is juice for the chorus girls".
- Stilwell owned a restaurant in Durango prior to taking over active management of the Strater.
- The Stilwell family remains an important part of Durango. Grandson, Greg, is a podiatrist here. His brother, Kenneth, is retired in Santa Fe, NM. Another brother, Charles, lives in Ft. Lauderdale, FL.
- The Stilwell building, located directly across the street from The Strater, is on property that has been in the family for generations.
- **The Strater Hotel Story**, (available for purchase at the front desk) has more about Charles E. Stilwell.

CHARLEY'S "NEW STRATER RULES" CIRCA 1901

The motto of this hotel is, eat, drink, and be merry when your bill is presented, but don't get gay.

If the bell in your room is broken, wring the towel.

Any guest who thinks his bill exorbitant may argue the question with the bull

terrier who is kept in the back yard for that purpose.

In case of fire, jump out of the window and turn to the left.

Breakfast from 7 to 8, dinner from hand to mouth, and supper if there is anything left. Guests will leave

the table because it is hard wood and not digestible.

The smile on the landlord's face is natural, but don't mean anything. That V on his forehead is also natural, and means that his time is worth \$5 a minute.