

## Acknowledgments

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Finally, I thank Henryetta and Sam Peck, my great-grandparents. (I carry Sam's name as my middle name.) From the 1930s to the 1970s, they owned and operated a hotel in Little Rock, Arkansas, where my grandfather, my mother, and her siblings grew up. Their stories about "the hotel" fascinate me and must have had something to do with my choice of topic. I cannot claim to understand hoteliers any better for having them as my ancestors, but I see now that this book is part of their legacy.

I knew my great-grandmother, Henryetta, personally. Like everyone else, I called her by her nickname, Ana, the German pronunciation of Anne. Her parents had descended from Berliners who came to this country in the first wave of German-Jewish immigration to the United States, just after the Revolutions of 1848. Henryetta was elegant, charming, funny, eccentric, and organized – everything a hotelier is supposed to be. This book is about a different sort of hotelier, a different kind of hotel, and a different time and place. It's about businessmen, big business, and the collapse of German urban society in the first part of the twentieth century.

And yet this book offers a tale that might just have resonated with my great-grandmother and her heir, my grandfather: How do you make sense of your hotel's final days? It is the 1970s in Little Rock, downtown is in decline, speculators are buying up what has yet to collapse, and the hotel can't do business as usual. You sell it. Decades pass as the building changes hands several times and finally settles into disuse. In the end, all that remains of the family business, the Hotel Sam Peck, our legacy, are matchbooks, postcards, a few photographs, and a little correspondence. What are we supposed to do now? My answer has been this book.