

The Hotel Monaco

The [Hotel Monaco](#) is a boutique hotel located in an up and coming area of Washington DC on F Street between the International Spy Museum and the National Shakespeare Company. The building the Hotel Monaco is housed in was originally built in 1793 and was known as Blodgett's Hotel. The building was part of a lottery scheme conceived of by Mr. Blodgett in the hopes of staying out of debtor's prison. The plan worked about as you would expect. Despite its name, Blodgett's Hotel did not operate as a hotel. The United States Theater, the first theater company in Washington DC, occupied the building in 1800. During the War of 1812, Blodgett's Hotel was the only building left standing after Washington was burned. It is said that the British spared the building at the request of Dr. William Thornton who was building a musical instrument in the building.

So what does all this have to do with patents?

In 1836, the US Patent Office and the US Post Office were both housed in Blodgett's Hotel. At the time, the US Post Office was under investigation for corruption regarding awarded contracts. On December 15th, 1836, a fire of mysterious origin broke out in Blodgett's Hotel destroying all the contents. While suspicions regarding the cause of the fire immediately fell upon the employees of the US Post Office, these accusations turned out to be unfounded – the incriminating records had previously been removed from the building and were later found by the authorities. Eventually it was determined that ashes/embers stored too closely to stored firewood was the cause of the fire.

All patent office records were lost in the fire. This included records for 9957 patents, 7000 models, and approximately 9,000 drawings. The records for only 2845 patents were recovered. Items lost in the fire included a folio of color patent drawings that were hand drawn by Robert Fulton and the first known patent for an internal combustion engine.

After the fire, it was decided that the US Patent Office would be moved to a fire proof building across the street from Blodgett's hotel (now known as the Smithsonian Museum's Reynolds Center). In a dazzling display of government efficiency, construction on the building was started in 1836 but wasn't completed until 1867.

Ten years later the new building was destroyed by fire.

Jim Carson is a principal of [RB Consulting, Inc](#) and a registered patent agent. He has over 30 years of experience across multiple industries including the biotechnology, textile, computer, telecommunications, and energy sectors. [RB Consulting, Inc](#) specializes in providing management, prototyping, and IP services to small and start-up businesses. He can be reached via email at jim@rbconsulting.us or by phone at (803) 792-2183.