

El Hotel Cosmopolita, Guadalajara.

Author: Tony Burton. 2025. Published at tonyburton.ca/chapala-history

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One of the most popular Guadalajara hotels in the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth century was the Hotel Cosmopolita.

This hotel began life at calle del Carmen #47, the intersection of calle del Carmen and calle San Francisco in Guadalajara.¹ It became much better known after moving in about 1892 about four blocks south to a much grander 3-story building overlooking Plaza San Francisco, and very close to the then terminus of the Mexican Central Railway.²

The Hotel Cosmopolita presumably predates 1885, the year it was bought by Francisco Fredenhagen, who moved from Mexico City to Guadalajara with his wife to personally manage the hotel.³ The following year, the Hotel Cosmopolita was mentioned in the press when General Ramón Corona stayed there.⁴ In the early years of Fredenhagen's ownership, the hotel was sometimes referred to as Hotel Fredenhagen, a name used by some later chroniclers in writing about the city.⁵

The original two-story hotel building on calle del Carmen was replaced in the 1890s, after the hotel moved, with a much grander building designed by Ernest Fuchs for the first Fábricas de Francia store. That store survived, with various remodelings, into the early years of this century, before becoming a Liverpool department store.

Francisco Fredenhagen advertised the Hotel Cosmopolita at this location (Esquina de la Calle del Carmen y San Francisco) with '76' as its telephone number. Telephone service had only begun in Guadalajara in 1884.⁶

In the same publication, Juan Fredenhagen and Francisco Fredenhagen were partners in "Bavaria Fábrica de Cerveza" (Bavaria Brewery) at Calle de San Felipe #26 in Guadalajara. Juan (not a sibling of Francisco, but presumably a relation)⁷ was probably the senior partner in the company, called "Fredenhagen y Compañía" in its advertisements.

¹ The street address is given in José Villa Gordo. 1888. *Guía y álbum de Guadalajara para los viajeros*. Guadalajara: José M Yguinez. Elsewhere (Ruhland, 1894), the address is given as calle del Carmen #40.

² In relation to current streets, the Hotel Cosmopolita's western side (part of which still stands) was on calle Colón; the hotel's main frontage was along calle Ferrocarril, and its eastern side was close to avenida 16 de Septiembre.

³ The Mexican Herald: 28 June 1909, 11 (when Fredenhagen sold the hotel).

⁴ La Voz de México, 11 Feb 1886, 5. General Ramón Corona became Governor of Jalisco in 1887; he was assassinated in 1889.

⁵ J. Trinidad Laris. 1945. *Guadalajara de las Indias*. Guadalajara: Talleres Gráfica, 126.

⁶ Daniel Muñoz Gámez. 1988. *El Correo, El Teléfono y El Telégrafo en Guadalajara*. El Gobierno de Jalisco.

⁷ The parents of Franz Fredenhagen and Karl Ludwig Fredenhagen (1841-1902), were Joachim Victor Jacob Fredenhagen (1795-1859) and Pauline Johanne Sophie Jurgens (1810-1864). The father of Juan Fredenhagen (1852-1908) was Juan Fredenhagen.



Fig. 1. Advertisements, ca 1890 (Ruhland, Directorio general de la ciudad de México?), for Fredenhagen business activities in Guadalajara.

Franz ('Francisco') Fredenhagen

Franz ('Francisco') Friedrich Helmuth Max Fredenhagen was born in Neustadt, Mecklenburg, Germany, in 1849 and died in Guadalajara in 1932. He emigrated with his wife, Frieda (1863-1940), from Germany to New York in 1882, and arrived in Mexico the following year.⁸ He was a machine builder and became a partner in La Compañía Cervecera Limitada, a Mexico City brewery.⁹ He and Frieda registered their marriage in Mexico City in February 1884, the same year he was granted exclusive rights for ten years for a refrigeration system he had invented.¹⁰

In 1885, Fredenhagen bought the Hotel Cosmopolita, and moved to Guadalajara. He was the principal owner or shareholder of Fredenhagen Sucesores, a company name which first appears in the press in 1884 in connection with Compañía Cervecera Limitada in Mexico City.¹¹

In the mid 1890s, Fredenhagen alerted anthropologist Frederick Starr to the many little pottery objects found in and around Lake Chapala, about which Starr subsequently wrote a short monograph.¹² Fredenhagen also told Starr about a "dwarf race" living in the hills near Ajijic, which the anthropologist planned to investigate with the assistance of Archbishop Gillow.¹³ In about 1900, the Fredenhagens built one of the earliest weekend 'cottages' in Chapala.¹⁴

⁸ Mexico Immigration Papers: "Frieda Vda. de Fredenhagen, Merik. 07/marzo/1935. (2 Fojas) Forma: F.14. Nombre: Frieda Vda. de Fredenhagen, Merik. ... Lugar de ingreso: Veracruz, Ver. Fecha de ingreso: 07/noviembre/1883."

⁹ When Karl Fredenhagen first arrived in Mexico is unclear, but in 1868 he and Agustín Ziehl bought a beer factory, established in 1845, in Mexico City from Pedro Strittmatter. Fredenhagen appears to have acquired sole control of the brewery by 1874. A decade later, when a "new brewer" (Karl's brother Franz Fredenhagen) arrived from Germany and the brewery introduced a wider range of high quality beers, it began advertising as "Compañía Cervecera Limitada Fredenhagen Sucesores."

¹⁰ Diario Oficial de la Federación: 28 July 1884.

¹¹ The Two Republics: 28 Aug 1884, 1.

¹² Frederick Starr. 1897. "The Little Pottery Objects of Lake Chapala, Mexico." University of Chicago Press.

¹³ The story of Gillow, a particularly interesting figure in Mexican history, is summarized in *Mexican Kaleidoscope: myths, mysteries and mystique*.

¹⁴ La Tierra, 1 Jun 1901, 125. The Fredenhagen's 'cottage' in Chapala was at, or very near, avenida Hidalgo #260.

Relatively little is known for sure about the Hotel Cosmopolita in its original location on calle del Carmen. But it is mentioned in a work by author May Carbutt. Carbutt and her husband, Edward, arrived in Guadalajara by train in December 1888, only about six months after the Irapuato-Guadalajara branch of the Mexican Central Railway had been completed. The Guadalajara railroad station was brand new. The Carbutts stayed several days at the Cosmopolita:

"When we arrived at Guadalajara sic) at 6 p.m., the station was densely packed with well-to-do people, who had come to see the train arrive.... We engaged a man to take our box to a cab, but he set off direct to the hotel with it at a tremendous pace, and we had to tear after him, for when one of these men gets a load to carry he runs, and the heavier it is the faster he goes. We were delighted to meet an hotel servant, and set him to pursue the box, while we followed quietly. The dust was dreadful. The hotel was quite good – Hotel Cosmopolita."¹⁵



Fig. 2. Postcard (ca 1908) published by A. Kij, showing Central Railway Station (left) and Hotel Cosmopolita (right).

Hotel Cosmopolita moves to new location

In the early 1890s, the Hotel Cosmopolita moved to a new building (architect unknown) within a stone's throw of the Mexican Central Railway Station. Photographs of this building, only a remnant of which still exists, show the date '1892' emblazoned in the uppermost entablature above its main entrance.¹⁶

Prominently displayed on one side of the main entrance of the new hotel was 'Francisco Fredenhagen Sucesores,' the name of Francisco Fredenhagen's main business entity. The name was first used from as early as 1884, though the details of the line of succession behind it are unclear.

The new Hotel Cosmopolita is mentioned in passing in 1893 in "An American Guelph," a fictional story published in *Harper's Weekly Journal of Civilization*.¹⁷

¹⁵ Mrs E. H. Carbutt. [May (Rhodes) Carbutt.] 1889. *Five Months' Fine Weather in Canada, Western U.S., and Mexico*. London: Sampson Low, Marston, etc, 222-223.

¹⁶ The year of the move is uncertain. The Ruhland 1894-1895 *Directorio general de los Estados...* listed the hotel address as calle del Carmen #40.

¹⁷ Albert Chandler Wall. 1893. "An American Guelph." *Harper's Weekly Journal of Civilization*, 14 Jan 1893, 41.

Shortly afterwards American intellectual Jeremiah Curtin stayed for several days at the Cosmopolita. He considered Guadalajara to be "the cleanest town in Mexico." According to Curtin, the Cosmopolita was a good hotel that had been built originally as "the city home of a rich Mexican." After the owner died, shortly after his home was completed, it became a hotel.

Curtin described how "our meals were served on the balcony overlooking a patio where flowers were in bloom and birds were singing. The meals were passable, except that, as in every hotel in Mexico, the butter was impossible, and one could not indulge in tea-drinking for none was served; coffee had no non-spirituos rival."¹⁸

In 1896 a travel piece about Guadalajara extolled the virtues of Hotel Cosmopolita, as one of the two best hotels, both run by Germans, in the city.¹⁹ The following year, a large tourist group led by C H Gates of Chicago enjoyed a banquet at the hotel.

Advertisements for the hotel from 1898 to 1901 give equal billing to two individuals: Francisco Fredenhagen and M. Lesser.²⁰



Fig. 3. 1901 advertisement for Hotel Cosmopolita (The Mexican Herald).

M. Lesser was Max ('Maximo') Carl Gustav Lesser (1862-1911). Born in Germany, the second eldest of six brothers, Lesser moved in 1885 to Mexico, where he divided his time between Mexico City and Guadalajara. Lesser married Antoinette ('Toni') Louise Rudolph (1865-1950) in Guadalajara in 1894. Their son Maximo was born the following year in Mexico City, their daughter Idetta was born in Guadalajara in 1899, and their daughter Anita in Mexico City in 1900. By April 1910, Lesser was living in Hudson, New Jersey, where he died the following year.

In 1902, when Karl Fredenhagen's eldest daughter, Emilia Margarita, married, she did so at the Hotel Cosmopolita in Guadalajara, despite living in Mexico City. The witnesses at her wedding included her uncle, Franz Fredenhagen, and Maximo Lesser.²¹ Her mother had died in 1899, and by 1902, her father had apparently already moved back to Germany, where he died a few months later.

Display advertisements for the Hotel Cosmopolita at the start of the 1900s proclaimed: "German house facing the Mexican Central Railroad Station. Passenger train arrives at dinner time. No trouble nor expense with the baggage or coaches. Agents at the depot."²²

¹⁸ Joseph Schafer (ed). 1940. Memoirs of Jeremiah Curtin. Madison, Wisconsin: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 528.

¹⁹ The Mexican Herald: 22 Apr 1896.

²⁰ The Mexican Herald: from 14 Oct 1898, 5 to 26 Aug 1901, 2.

²¹ Marriage registration, via Ancestry.com

²² e.g. The Mexican Herald: 26 Aug 1901, 2.

How much did the hotel cost at this time? A 1902 letter from W. W. Wylie and his wife to their hometown newspaper in the U.S. explained that: "At the Hotel Cosmopolita where we are making a somewhat extended stay, we pay \$3 per day each, or \$1.15 American money, and the service is equal in every way to any \$3 a day house in the U.S."²³



Fig. 4. The Hotel Cosmopolita. Image from postcard published by Juan Kaiser, ca 1905. The building on the right was later the Hotel Bohnstedt.

U.S. Fugitive stays at Hotel Cosmopolita

In 1902, Charles Kratz, one of several individuals indicted following a major investigation into political corruption ('boodling') in St. Louis, Missouri, fled to Guadalajara. Accused of bribery, Kratz had significant mining investments in Jalisco and friends in the city. He took a room at the Hotel Cosmopolita under the name Charles Kunz, but was soon arrested and placed in the Guadalajara jail. After his lawyers showed that the arrest was for a non-extraditable offence, Kratz returned to the hotel. In the meantime, William Desmond, the St. Louis Chief of Detectives, had arrived in Guadalajara to return Kratz to the U.S. to stand trial.²⁴

Things did not go quite as planned. Kratz remained at the Cosmopolita, with four soldiers hired to keep him safe from anything Desmond might try. Desmond returned north empty handed. The following year, Desmond spent three months in Guadalajara arguing his case. In January 1904, following his third trip, Desmond finally brought his fugitive north to stand trial. But, in a final twist, a series of further delays and illness meant that Kratz eventually escaped conviction.

In 1905, American photographer Charles Betts Waite²⁵ registered various photos of the Hotel Cosmopolita, including #769, which is a view titled "From top of Hotel Cosmopolita, Guadalajara, Mex," and #1065 (Fig. 5.), a view of the front

²³ Gallatin County Republican: 30 Dec 1902, 1.

²⁴ (a) The St Louis Republic: 10 May 1902, 9. (b) Jalisco Times: 2 Jan 1904.

²⁵ Tony Burton. 2024. "[Charles Betts Waite, one of Mexico's most important pre-revolutionary photographers.](#)"

of the hotel.²⁶ Interestingly, the building next to the hotel in that image is the "General Real Estate and Mining Agency," which later became the Cantina Alemana and the Hotel Bohnstedt, started by Maximo Bohnstedt.



Fig. 5. Charles B. Waite photograph, ca 1905, of Station and Hotel Cosmopolita.

Maximo Bohnstedt (1861-1923), who had arrived in Guadalajara in 1904, was the manager of the Hotel Cosmopolita at the time of Waite's photo. Bohnstedt left the Cosmopolita in about 1906, and was briefly the manager of the Lake Chapala Navigation company, which operated boats on the lake,²⁷ before returning to Guadalajara to open the Cantina Alemana in about 1907, as a prelude to opening the Hotel Bohnstedt about two years later.

The hotel was the scene of a journalistic tragedy in 1909. Andrew C. MacKenzie, a promising young US journalist, who was widely traveled, and who had contracted tuberculosis in the jungles of Peru, died in the hotel while on an assignment. MacKenzie had worked for 'New York Press' and contributed to many newspapers and magazines.²⁸

Fredenhagen sells the Hotel Cosmopolita

This unfortunate incident may have helped trigger Fredenhagen's decision a few months later to sell the hotel. The business was bought in June 1909 by a Mr E. Miller, a former proprietor of the Windsor hotel in Monterrey. "The deal covers a five-year lease on the three-story building now occupied by the hotel, fronting the National Railways station, and all the hotel furnishings."²⁹ Fredenhagen and his wife planned to move to their cottage in Chapala, before retiring to Germany. Apparently, events in Europe caused them to rethink that idea; Fredenhagen died in Guadalajara in 1932, and his wife died there eight years later.

Even without the personal attention of Fredenhagen, the hotel remained very popular, especially among Guadalajara's German and Swiss community. For

²⁶ Diario Oficial de la Federación: 19 Jan 1905, 7; 10 Feb 1905, 6.

²⁷ The Mexican Herald: 6 June 1906, 3.

²⁸ Iberia: 13 Feb 1909, 2.

²⁹ The Mexican Herald: 28 June 1909, 11

example, in 1912, publisher Juan Kaiser and his wife, Bertha, who were close friends of Fredenhagen, arranged a celebration at the hotel for their family and friends, following the baptism of their son.³⁰

The hotel's popularity owed much to its perfect location, within easy walking distance of the main railroad station. The same names crop up repeatedly on the lists of guests staying at the hotel published in contemporaneous newspapers. For instance, English businessman Victor Hunton regularly stayed overnight there between 1917 and 1920 en route between his home in Chapala and his diverse business interests in Ameca, Etzatlán, Aguascalientes, El Paso, and elsewhere.³¹



Fig. 6. View from Hotel Cosmopolita along calle Colón, 1923. Photo by Helen Creighton, reproduced courtesy of Nova Scotia archives, Canada.

Canadian Helen Creighton, a renowned folklorist in later life, arrived in Mexico from Cuba in 1922 and taught most of the following year at the American School of Guadalajara.³² A keen amateur photographer, her photographs of Guadalajara, now in the Nova Scotia archives in Canada, include this view along calle Colón from the Hotel Cosmopolita.³³

That same year (1923) the Hotel Cosmopolita's convenient location was immediately apparent to English novelist D. H. Lawrence. After finding a house to rent in Chapala, he sent the following telegram back to his wife, who had remained in Mexico City:

"CHAPALA PARADISE, TAKE EVENING TRAIN. PURNELLS MEET YOU IN GUADALAJARA I IN CHAPALA. IF ANY CONFUSION GO TO HOTEL COSMOPOLITA ACROSS FROM STATION."³⁴

³⁰ (a) Verena Kaiser-Ernst. 2012. *Tagebuch Von Bertha Kaiser-Peter Fur Ihren sohn Hans Paul Kaiser*. Stuttgart: T H Schetter. (b) Tony Burton. 2023. "[Chapala 1912-1922: Excerpts from Bertha Kaiser's diary.](#)"

³¹ *El Informador*: 14 Oct 1917; 1 Jul 1918, 3; 6 Mar 1919; 28 Jun 1919; 19 Jul 1919; 19 Oct 1919; 10 Nov 1919. 24 Nov 1919, 23 Dec 1919; 15 Jan 1920; 18 Jan 1920; 25 Mar 1920; 31 May 1920; 4 Jun 1920; 9 Jun 1920.

³² Biography of Creighton: <https://lakechapalaartists.com/?p=10495>

³³ Creighton's photographs can be viewed online at Nova Scotia archives. <https://archives.novascotia.ca/creighton/>

³⁴ Quoted in Witter Bynner. 1951. *Journey with Genius*. New York: The John Day Co. Lawrence in Chapala: <https://lakechapalaartists.com/?p=2971>

The Purnells mentioned in the telegram were Dr George Purnell, an American dentist living in Guadalajara, and his daughter, Idella, a former student of poet Witter Bynner, who had accompanied Lawrence and his wife to Mexico.³⁵

A few years later, the Purnells befriended a visiting American writer, Emma Lindsay Squier, who spent several months at the Hotel Cosmopolita while collecting local folk stories and legends. The Purnells allowed Squier to borrow their car whenever she wanted. Squier later recounted how, on one occasion, when the car had a flat tire in the middle of nowhere, she was helped by a man "wearing an elaborate charro suit" riding a black horse.

"I felt sure that he was a wealthy rural hacendado. But although he asked me all about myself, he volunteered no information about himself. When he found out that I was living at the Cosmopolita, he said gallantly, 'Mark your balcony railing with white chalk, and some night I will give you a "gallo!"' (A serenade.) I said I would be delighted."

Only when she was safely back at the Purnells, did she realize, after recognizing his picture on wanted posters, that her rescuer had been the notorious 'El Catorce,' a "bloodthirsty bandit who had attacked and set fire to a passenger train!"³⁶

The end of an era

The Hotel Cosmopolita closed in 1929. The building was then used as offices for the Ferrocarril Sud Pacífico de México, whose line from Guadalajara north to Guaymas and the U.S. had been completed in 1927.³⁷

This part of Guadalajara has been extensively altered since. Avenida 16 de Septiembre was widened in the 1940s, and the original Central Railroad Station lost its purpose in 1958, when a new railroad station was inaugurated two kilometers to the south.³⁸

Much of the main facade of the Hotel Cosmopolita building was demolished³⁹ in 1966 for a new building of little architectural merit. The one small section of the original hotel which still stands—on the eastern side of calle Colón immediately north of calle Ferrocarril—has a series of small commercial establishments at street level, with offices and rooms for rent above.⁴⁰

³⁵ Idella Purnell (1901-1982): <https://lakechapalaartists.com/?p=2968>

³⁶ Emma Lindsay Squier. 1934. Gringa: An American Woman in Mexico, 130-132. The train attack took place in April 1927. Biography of Squier: <https://lakechapalaartists.com/?p=3239>

³⁷ Javier Hernández Larrañaga. 2018. Guadalajara: Identidad Perdida. 3rd edition. Guadalajara: Impre-Jal.

³⁸ Xavier Iturbide Godínez. Revisiones GDL. [Colón 319 - Hotel Cosmopolita](#).

³⁹ El Informador: 21 May 1966, 4.

⁴⁰ Xavier Iturbide Godínez. Revisiones GDL. [Colón 319 - Hotel Cosmopolita](#).