

The exterior of the newly renovated Hotel Jerome still exudes the same Victorian charm.



gilded-age glam

THE CROWN JEWEL OF ASPEN'S VICTORIAN ERA, A NEWLY REDESIGNED HOTEL JEROME BEAUTIFULLY DISPLAYS ASPEN'S PENCHANT FOR HISTORIC MODERN LIVING. BY LINDA HAYES

Since opening in 1889 on Aspen's Main Street, Hotel Jerome, with its classic red-brick façade, has been a mainstay of Aspen hospitality. Silver miners and skiers, aristocracy and Hollywood, locals and wannabes alike, were welcomed equally to take shelter under its roof and celebrate (or commiserate, accordingly) at the venerable J-Bar. If its walls could talk, they'd tell volumes about a colorful past that included everything from galas to ghosts.

Recently, talk around town turned to the fate of the historic hotel, which was shut tight for a thorough renovation. Sure there was confidence that Auberge Resorts—which added the hotel to its portfolio of high-end properties and took over management in November 2011—would do things right. But would the hotel retain its beloved quirks and charms? Would its Victorian-era legacy be respected and preserved? Would it still feel like the Jerome?

Well, thanks to an intensive effort by a hand-picked team—including Aspen-based Rowland + Broughton Architecture and Urban Design, and Todd-Avery Lenahan, a regular visitor to Aspen whose Las Vegas-based TAL-Studio is renowned for progressive hospitality design—town is certain to heave a collective sigh of relief when the hotel reopens this December as Hotel Jerome, an Auberge Resort.

No one can speak to the matter better than general manager Tony DiLucia, whose previous 20-year career at Hotel Jerome resumed when Auberge Resorts took over and COO Eric Calderon (formerly of The Little Nell in Aspen) asked him to re-up. "I can't tell you how many times I was asked about the renovation at cocktail parties," DiLucia laughs. "There was a perception that it was going to be very contemporary, and what did that mean? It's an eclectic mix, but it's still very much like the Jerome and feels

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The renovation kept original details like the fireplace and patterned rug.

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correct. The spell that's always been cast when you walk in is still there."

Except for new windows (blue, for historical accuracy), exterior work on the hotel was pretty much in the form of a touch-up. Inside is another story. Structural work came under the auspices of Sarah Broughton, principle of Rowland + Broughton, who, in addition to being the former vice chair on the City of Aspen's Historic Preservation Commission (the Jerome is on the National Register of Historic Places), conducted more than 200 hours of research to ensure historical accuracy. "The Jerome has long been revered as a historical entity in town," she says. "We wanted to pay homage to where the building had been over time and take it into the next century."

The cornerstone of the interior update is the transformation of the hotel lobby and atrium. Heritage pieces, such as the front desk and grand fireplace, anchor the space, and original details, including the Indian rug—patterned tile floor, remain. Adjoining the atrium, a new living room is set within its original location, the space of the former Century Room. A new and as yet unnamed American bistro restaurant has overtaken the former Jacob's Corner space, which has been expanded to the outdoor Terrace windows. "The new public spaces will be the number-one gathering place in Aspen for a mix of guests and the local community," DiLucia says. "There's a new appreciation of what those areas mean to everybody."

As with all of the interiors, the 94 guest rooms and suites (26 in the original portion of the hotel and 68 in a newer addition) have been significantly upgraded, with attention to both period style and luxury, by Lenahan. "As designers, we all have certain landmarks that we dream of as great design



Guest rooms embody both period style and luxury.



Modern amenities meet classic style.

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opportunities and canvases for our work, and the Jerome was one of them for me," he says. "People love charm and history, but when addressing a finished palette, there still needs to be something fashionable and relevant to today's luxury hotel guest."

To that end, all of the guest-room furnishings are custom, including the butler bar cabinet, writing tables, and beds. Materials, including cashmere, houndstooth linen, rugged leather, and pin-stripe wool, evoke Aspen's four seasons. Elaborate new moldings frame the rooms, and each is outfitted with state-of-the-art technology.

Further sensitivity to combining modern living and historic preservation comes into play in two other areas: a new, three-treatment-room spa on the lower level that will be distinctly modern, and the revered J-Bar, which, aside from sporting some spit and polish, will retain its local watering-hole appeal.

While all concerned are thrilled about the Jerome's latest incarnation, sentiments may best be summed up by Auberge Resorts' Calderon. "This renovation will honor the historic integrity of the Jerome and enhance the guest experience," he says. "Our relaunch will be a joyous occasion." **AP**