A Brilliant Debut

The dynamic design team behind the Hotel Jerome's renovation plans to bring the property back as Aspen's social hub, with updated and enhanced amenities, while respecting its history. BY KATE MEYERS

GATHER ROUND The newly designed Living Room will be the next hot spot in town; the Hotel Jerome in 1929, *above*.

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ASPEN'S HOTEL JEROME, in an imposing three-story, redbrick building, has been standing on the corner of East Main and North Mill streets since 1889. Built by former Macy's president Jerome Wheeler, it was intended to be a grand hotel in the European tradition. It is said to have been the first hotel of its kind west of the Mississippi, and boasted such luxuries as electricity and running water. Rooms went for about $4 a night.

For 123 years, this National Historic Landmark has been a beloved symbol of the Old West. And the hotel's lively J-Bar has attracted locals and luminaries, from members of the Army's legendary Tenth Mountain Division to the late Hunter S. Thompson. It is with this rich history in mind that the hotel, which recently joined Auberge Resorts, is undergoing a remarkable renovation (scheduled for completion in December 2012).

"We're lucky to have this history and lucky that the Silver Boom was happening here," says Sarah Broughton of Rowland + Broughton, a local architect who has spent eight years on the city's Historic Preservation Committee. Broughton is thrilled to head the team in charge of restoring and enhancing the Jerome's elegance. "The hotel has great bones. We are respecting the historic structure and essence while updating it for the modern traveler."

Much of the property's layout—the atrium lobby, front desk, and 93 guest rooms and suites—will be architecturally preserved but significantly redesigned. Guests will feel as though they're checking into the glory of the Old West, but the hotel will have an up-to-date crispness and classic design. The atrium lobby, for instance, will be expanded into a large living room with its own bar, and serve as a gathering space to socialize. And the new Auberge Spa, with three treatment rooms and a movement studio for yoga, will be housed in the building's lower level. Another preserved highlight—the historic grand ballroom, with its streaming natural light, has hosted many events and social gatherings over the years.

The challenge in reviving the building's historic feel was given to designer Todd-Avery Lenahan. To begin work, Lenahan returned to the canvas of the original building. This meant removing just about everything from the hotel's 1980s redesign—no more gilt and Victorian touches. "I've gone back to the original

TOP NOTES Life in Aspen is filled with memorable activities.

NEW WEST *From top left:* Guest rooms blend modern comforts with historic details; the restaurant has a sophisticated look and feel.

photography and distilled what its true point of view was," says Lenahan. "My job is to be respectful of the building and the town's history. I've tried to capture a ruggedness that has matured out of its Wild West roots into something that has arrived."

Lenahan has added period base and crown moldings as well as new millwork to the ceilings and doors, enhancing the grandeur of the hotel's already spacious guest rooms. The rooms have a soulful, Western authenticity with the bonus of indulgent luxuries that are de rigueur Auberge: plush bathrobes, custom-blended bath products, and gourmet snacks. Key decorative elements—cashmere curtains, burnished-leather bed frames, and cubist carpet design—are grounded by various nods to history, such as a framed archival photo of an indigenous Ute Indian chief.

"So many hotels are copies of one another," says Lenahan. "I want people to walk in and have the instant validation that this property features the best of this charming town—a treasure chest that captures the dimensions of Aspen." □ *Hotel Jerome, 330 East Main Street, Aspen, Colorado. Room rates from $475 to $4,600. For reservations, call 800/331-7213; hoteljerome.aubergeresorts.com.*

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