



The historic Mesa Store, located on Main Street at the entrance to Aspen, is the future home of architecture and interior design firm Rowland+Broughton's Aspen studio and national headquarters. Courtesy of Rowland+Broughton.

Aspen's Historic Mesa Store Becomes Architecture Firm's Headquarters

Renowned Colorado architecture and interior design firm Rowland+Broughton plans a sensitive transformation of a beloved Main Street landmark.

BY REBECCA L. OLGEIRSON | AUGUST 28, 2017



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For more than 125 years, visitors to downtown Aspen have been greeted by the Mesa Store, an iconic Old West structure on the bustling corner of Fourth and Main streets. Built in the 1890s as a general store with a shopkeeper's residence above, the building features a two-story, false-front facade, traditional lap-wood siding, and a covered front porch that once shaded a wooden boardwalk.

The Mesa Store has since been home to a bakery and, most recently, a yoga and pilates studio. But now, thanks to local architecture and interior design firm [Rowland+Broughton Architecture & Urban Design](#), the building is getting a major update in preparation for its next act, as the firm's Aspen studio and national headquarters.

Led by the husband-and-wife team of John Rowland and Sarah Broughton, Rowland+Broughton is one of Aspen's busiest firms, known for its work on the Hotel Jerome and Little Nell, Matsuhisa restaurant's new Denver outpost, and countless notable residences across the state. This project came about after months of searching for a new space that could accommodate the firm's rapid growth; John and Sarah had fallen in love with the Mesa Store back when they first drove into town in 2000, and just happened to discover that it was for sale when flipping through a magazine. The building was put under contract on New Year's Eve 2015, and it has taken years to complete city approvals, renter lease agreements, and SBA loan processing before construction could begin.

The project—anticipated to start this October and wrap up one year later—will encompass restoration and preservation of the existing building, plus the addition of a new 3,500-square-foot workspace with a private residence above. But how do you build a modern addition while maintaining historical elements, as demanded by the local preservation rules?

“We're really lucky there's so much in the way of historical research to help us with the process,” Rowland says. Old photos and documents show that a similar one-story, false-front general store once sat in the same spot as the proposed addition; that old building will inspire the new space, which will be set back from the street and feature similar lap-wood siding, engineered to withstand the elements.

Many of the Mesa Store's original exterior details—such as the false facade—can't be altered and will be preserved. But the interiors will undergo a complete transformation that incorporates the firm's favored palette of white-oak millwork and reclaimed-wood flooring. Open office spaces and large, airy conference rooms will foster a productive yet creative environment. Rowland and Broughton will live above the offices, in a space they describe as a “modern riff on the pioneer cabin.”

Rowland says their new home's style and location perfectly complement the firm's hometown ethos. “We live and do a lot of work here [in Aspen]...and to be able to shepherd this [building] into the future is something we don't take lightly,” he says. “It is an honor and privilege to work on a project with so much restoration and preservation complexity. Anyone who knows us knows it's the perfect spot for us.”

