

DESIGN STORY

The Hotel Jerome Debuts a Newly Renovated Pool and Courtyard

Summer guests will be the first to enjoy a refurbished outdoor living area with modern amenities and historical charm.

By [Alison Margo](#)



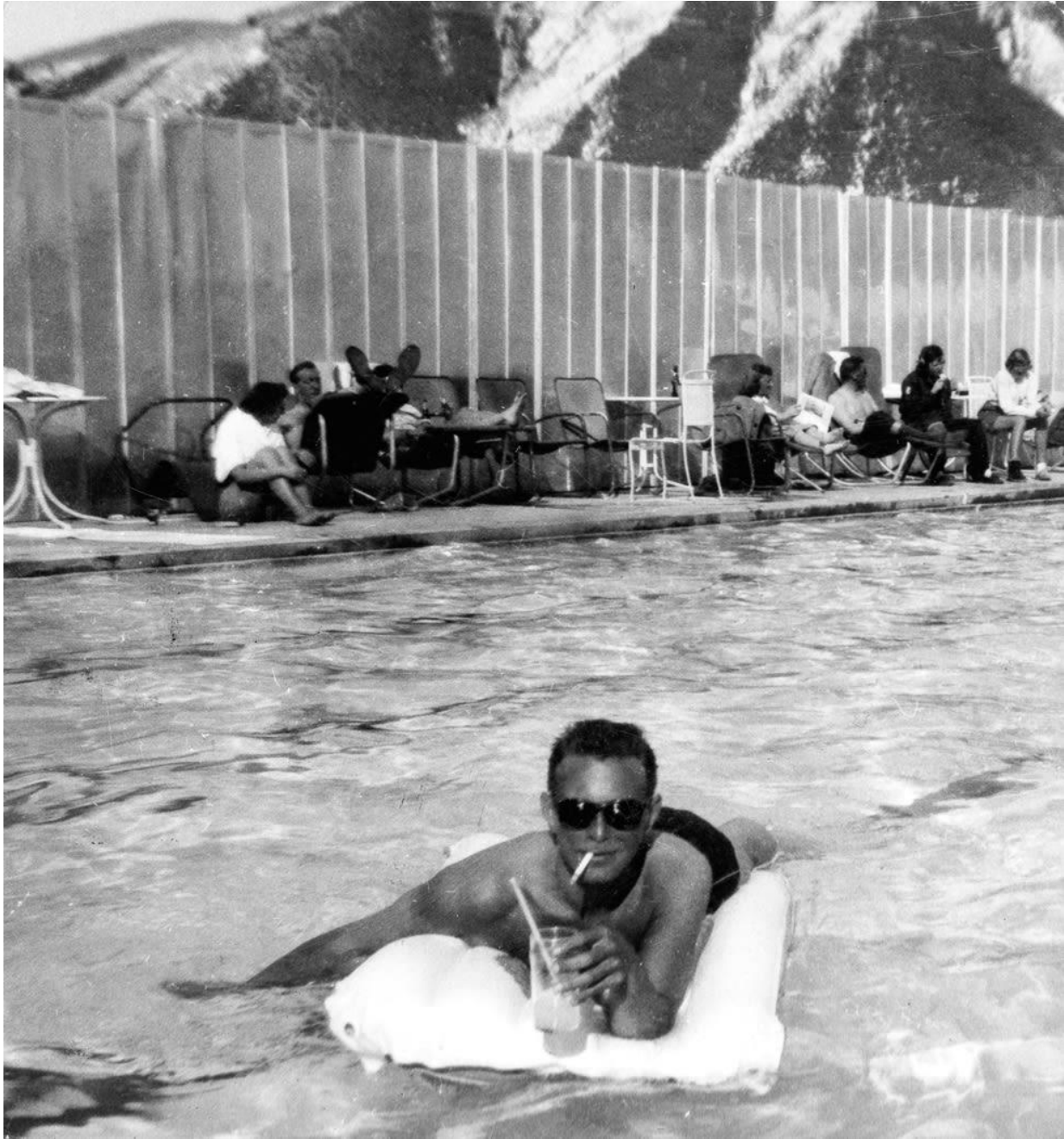
The renovated pool area features a cabinet with heated towels and robes and a “pooltender” who will serve food and drinks.

IMAGE: [COURTESY: ROWLAND AND BROUGHTON](#)

When Toni Kronberg moved to Aspen in 1976, the Hotel Jerome's pool was the symbolic heart of downtown, not only as a venue where she could teach swim lessons, but for everyone from families with young kids to ski bums and celebrities.

"One of the most impressive things about the pool back in the day was how big it was, almost half a block," recalls Kronberg, a former swim coach at the University of Colorado who has been teaching local kids to swim for more than 40 years. "It was the only pool in downtown Aspen, and it was quite the scene," she adds. "You felt like you were on a cruise ship. It was like going on vacation." Kronberg remembers chaise lounges to chill on, a bar that served umbrella drinks, and a triathlon that finished with a race in the hotel pool.

Gary Cooper, Lana Turner, and John Wayne are said to have lounged poolside at the Jerome in the 1950s, followed by the wave of counterculture celebrities who flocked to Aspen in the '70s, including Hunter S. Thompson, Jimmy Buffett, and Jack Nicholson. Aspen native Tony Vagneur remembers hunting down celebrity autographs at the hotel as a kid in the '50s, knocking on room doors to see who answered. "We'd read Mary Hayes's column to see what celebrities were in town, and they'd always put them up at the Jerome," Vagneur says. "I had quite the collection."



Bob Colen at the Hotel Jerome pool in 1951.

IMAGE: [COURTESY: ASPEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY](#)

But in 1987, the legendary pool was replaced by an annex with additional guest rooms, and a new pool, much smaller than the original, was built in a sunken courtyard.

More recently, Aspen- and Denver-based architects Rowland and Broughton, along with interior designer Todd-Avery Lenahan, of Las Vegas-based TAL Studio, were brought

onboard to renovate the pool and courtyard, refurbish the 1904 *Aspen Times* building (now owned by the hotel), and conceive a new addition with six luxury suites. The team, which had also worked on the hotel's much-lauded renovation in 2012, looked to history for a starting point.

"The challenge, as you can imagine, is designing to this very historic, prominent site," says Principal Architect Sarah Broughton. They began by studying Sanborn maps (used at the turn of the century to assess fire insurance liability) that dated back to 1890 and historical photographs to understand the original structure of the hotel and *Aspen Times* structure.

Adds Broughton, "The design of the new lodging building is meant to be quiet to respect the proximity and harmony of the historic buildings and to become one with the pool and courtyard. For the exterior, we used stained-wood siding and wooden screens with planters instead of brick. The idea is that the plants will grow up the sides of the building so it becomes one with the courtyard."

The next step in achieving that fluidity was to raise the sunken courtyard by 5 feet to allow new pool access from four nearby rooms and create a seamless view to the street and Aspen Mountain beyond. Meanwhile, a later addition to the *Aspen Times* building was torn down to restore the structure to its historic footprint, and original windows on its east side were restored. A large elm tree in the center of the courtyard visually anchors the surrounding greenery and landscaping, which was handled by Aspen-based Design Workshop.

Lenahan integrated some of the same type of modernized Victorian finishes into the pool and courtyard that made the hotel remodel so successful, like custom tables with refurbished wrought-iron bases. One thing that carries over from the pool's long-ago past are the chaise lounges, though they're a lot cushier than the original plastic-slat variety. With a nod to modern amenities, the patio surrounding the pool is now heated, as are the towels, just in case the two hot tubs aren't enough to keep hotel guests warm on a chilly evening. Also, several new cabanas provide a space for more private lounging.



The Hotel Jerome's renovated courtyard was designed to serve as an outdoor living room for hotel guests and restaurant diners.

IMAGE: [COURTESY: ROWLAND AND BROUGHTON](#)

“You can see how much both our design teams respected all the decades,” says the Jerome’s longtime general manager, Tony DiLucia. “The pool and courtyard will give hotel guests new favorite spots to gather, and the courtyard will remain open to the public.” He has a few treats up his sleeve for pool guests this summer, like serving fruit kabobs, boozy snow cones, and homemade popsicle sticks. The hotel will also offer yoga classes poolside, casting lessons for wannabe fly fishers, and a “skinny dip” menu that features lighter, healthier fare.

Though the pool itself is no longer the community gathering spot that it once was—the Aspen Recreation Center now hosts local swimmers—the luxe new digs surrounding it might still serve a local kid or two hoping to get an autograph.