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September | October 2006

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Ashland Springs Hotel Reflects Enlightenment Era of the mid-1920s

Following an incredible transformation that was noted in *Architectural Digest*, the Ashland Springs Hotel in downtown Ashland has turned from its fading glory to become an opulent European-style boutique hotel. Only one block from Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the makeover has also helped to promote the 70-room hotel as a conference center and wedding mecca, with its natural light ballroom and adjoining English gardens that feature a courtyard, gazebo, fountain and old English roses.

When owners Doug and Becky Neuman approached San Francisco Interior Designers Candra Scott and Richard Anderson with ideas for a hotel renovation, the Ashland couple was hopeful that the well-respected design team could complement their vision. And after reviewing their portfolio — which included Portland's Governor Hotel — and with only a few words from Candra, the Neumans were persuaded to commission the West Coast designers of Candra Scott and Anderson to undertake the Ashland Springs Hotel project. "Whenever we restore a building, our goal is to tell its story," Candra stated shortly after meeting the couple who had purchased Ashland, Oregon's, historic Mark Antony Hotel.

Telling the hotel's story was at the heart of the Neumans' plan when they purchased the 75-year-old

Ashland icon in 1998. At that time, the hotel had been closed for about eight months. According to Becky, Doug had always considered the property to be a prime piece of real estate and had promised to buy the hotel if it was ever for sale. Once they purchased it, the Neumans quickly went to work with plans to restore its purpose and reopen with a fresh energy and surprising interior design.

A designer at heart, Becky knew that she would participate in the renovation concept and process, but that the magnitude and historic nature of the project required the highest level of competency and creativity. And though the Neumans interviewed many talented designers early on, none quite grasped the heart and soul of the project with the same level of understanding and enthusiasm as the San Francisco team. "Everyone we talked to had good ideas and proved they could do a beautiful job, but they were a bit too predictable. I didn't want just a pretty hotel, I wanted the design to tell a great story and to reflect the history of Oregon."

So with Candra and Richard leading the design process, the investigation began. Or, as the designers put it, "the archeology dig" got underway. What story would the 75-room structure tell, and how would the designers express it with color, furniture and accessories?

What was happening in 1925 when the Lithia Springs Hotel was originally built and how did the structure fit into the cultural ambience of the early 1900s?

With the help of historian George Kramer, newspaper archives and the Southern Oregon Historical Society, the 'dig' turned up many fascinating facts about Ashland and the surrounding areas in the 1920s. However, two main features appeared to have the biggest impact on the region during that period.

For one, people had discovered the curative waters of Lithia Springs and were arriving in town to experience natural healing. Secondly, Lithia Park had become a center of inspiration and enlightenment as traveling lecturers, musicians, outdoor enthusiasts, evangelists and others would arrive in town for a few days or longer. In those days, audiences would sit in chairs that had been set up under the canvas and wood Chautauqua beehive-like dome. Also, the stream banks were lined with campers who were eager to hear new information, ideas and theologies.

Inspired by the enlightenment era, Candra and Richard created a naturalist concept for the Ashland Springs Hotel that would reflect the multiplicity of the 1925s in Ashland. Using the same passion for the preservation of historical architecture and flair for the dramatic,

Candra and Richard designed each room individually, bringing in eclectic collections from Europe and other areas of the world. They used specific color schemes and herbs, flora, seashells and other natural elements throughout to complete the basement-to-parapet renovation and to display the easy elegance of today's Ashland Springs Hotel.



The beautifully restored landmark hotel is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is a member of the Historic Hotels of America. Even so, the Ashland Springs Hotel features modern amenities and outstanding client services. It combines the charm of a bed and breakfast, the friendliness of a small inn, the feel of a spa resort and the safety and convenience of a hotel.

"Each room is like its own chapter that becomes part of the main story," says Becky. "It's been a great adventure and we are happy to share it with visitors from around the world."

To complement the European-boutique inn, Becky designed and opened Larks - Home Kitchen Cuisine within the hotel. Its menu features farm-to-table comfort food prepared by Executive Chef Damon Jones.

For more information or to make reservations, visit www.ashlandsspringshotel.com or call 1-888-795-4545

