

Seattle Post-Intelligencer

http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/business/369873_arctic08.html



The ballroom in the Arctic Club Building downtown is just one part of the historic building that has been transformed into a hotel. (Joshua Trujillo / P-I)

Historic Arctic Club restored for new life as hotel

Tuesday, July 8, 2008

Last updated 8:49 a.m. PT

By **KIMBERLY CHOU**
P-I REPORTER

For the Northwest entrepreneurs who had come back from Alaska flush with Klondike gold, forming an exclusive gentlemen's club in 1908 seemed the natural thing to do. Commissioning a luxe new headquarters to share stories and whiskey sodas came next.

What became known as the Arctic Club Building -- famous for the ivory walrus tusks lining its exterior, and its gilt-ceilinged Northern Lights Dome Room -- was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1978 and registered as a national historic landmark in 1993. Commissioned by Arctic Club members and designed by Seattle architect A. Warren Gould, it was finished in 1917. In the years since, the space has gone from men's club to converted office space.

Now, 100 years after gold rush veterans first came together, the historic building, at 700 Third Ave., will open Wednesday as the Arctic Club Hotel Seattle. Spokane-based Arctic Club Hotel LLC bought it from the city of Seattle in 2005 for \$5.1 million.

General manager Stan Kott said the developers' aim of turning the Arctic Club property into a hotel was one of the main reasons they were able to buy it from the city, though there was competition.

"This whole area of Seattle is about the rejuvenation and development of the area," he said. "There's just so much business



zoom

Joshua Trujillo / P-I

Restoration of the 100-year-old Arctic Club Building took more than two years.

and commerce in this end of town and no hotel."

The new hotel honors the building's history, from its culture to its architecture. Because of the requirements of historic preservation, it has taken more than two years to complete the project.

"We're blessed with good bone structure in this building," said spokeswoman Lisa Nourse. "We wanted to retain it."

Kott said builders gutted the building except for the Alaskan marble lobby and the famous Dome Room, home to numerous social events and weddings (including one scheduled for the hotel's opening weekend). Forty percent of the building is part of the historic landmark designation, Kott said, which explains why certain decisions took longer than one would expect.

"We had to get approval on (those parts of the building), from design to architecture to light fixtures," Kott said. "Just getting the flag poles approved was a three-month process. ... It took a little more time to go through (historic preservation), but it was well worth it."



zoom

Joshua Trujillo / P-I

Developers tried to reflect the Arctic Club's original style during its restoration.

In addition, the renovation required "modest seismic upgrades," which have been blended into the architecture. For example, steel reinforcements wrapped around the walls serve as window-side settees in certain guestrooms. This is not the first time that earthquake precautions have been taken with the Arctic Club Building: The 27 molded walrus tusks rounding the building's perimeter were removed in the 1940s and replaced with plastic after two earthquakes in 1946.

The owners "were scared that the earthquakes would cause accidents and the ivory tusks would come down and impale someone on the street," Nourse said.

Candra Scott of the preservation-focused firm Candra Scott & Anderson designed the hotel, where room rates will range from \$275 to \$615. Scott's selections for the Arctic Club are vintage pieces or historically inspired replicas, such as an antique vanity table in the women's restroom in the lobby and specialty lamps constructed from old maps and boat bumpers.



zoom

Joshua Trujillo / P-I

Ornamental walrus heads adorn the perimeter of the Arctic Club Building.

While the hotel has a new walrus logo, traces of the original Arctic Club logo -- two circles connected with lines and crosses -- are still evident in the tiles of the Cherry Street entrance, or stamped on the back of a vintage-inspired ottoman.

In the project team's throwback to the 20th century golden days, it was also necessary to reverse design decisions by previous occupants. When the owners bought the Arctic Club Building in 2005, the white oak walls in the one-time billiard room were painted over in lavender paint, Kott said; workers spent two months removing the color from the walls by hand.

The building will reintroduce itself with "a soft opening," Kott said. The hotel will plan for a grand opening celebration later on, once the ninth and 10th floors are completed; the 10th floor will be composed of 10 rooms with outdoor patios and will serve as a concierge floor available for rent. An

opening for the hotel's adjoining restaurant, Juno, emphasizing seasonal and ethically purchased fare, is slated for August.

P-I reporter Kimberly Chou can be reached at 206-448-8138 or kimberlychou@seattlepi.com.

© 1998-2008 Seattle Post-Intelligencer