



FEATURE: HISTORIC HOTELS

Old

The Stonewall Jackson Hotel and Conference Center in Staunton, Va., preserves history through its 86-year-old original building as well as the Earth through its eco-friendly practices. Pictured here is the hotel's Colonnade Ballroom.

# Is The New Green When It Comes To Historic Venues

By Marlane Bundock

Think only new hotels are eco-friendly? Not true, according to the Historic Hotels of America (HHA), which is part of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and promotes the preservation not only of history but also of Mother Earth.

"Preservation is the original green," said Thierry Roch, HHA executive director. "Preservation prevents energy and material use to tear down and build new. And historic properties were originally designed more than 50 years ago in an efficient manner with quality materials and positioned in ways to maximize sunlight for lighting and cross breezes for air conditioning. Our hotel members are sensitive to preserving the past

and future while offering distinguishable experiences. All are offering eco-friendly options to meetings in various ways, such as using local and regional co-op farms and other local vendors to supply goods."

Historic hotels across the South are also practicing conservation efforts within their operations, offering green meeting services and working to protect the Earth's resources in unique ways. For example, Kentucky's 63-room Boone Tavern Hotel and Restaurant of Berea College, built in 1909, is in the final phase of its \$10.6 million eco-friendly renovation that began in 2008. The project, according to hotel officials, will preserve and

enhance the historic character of Boone Tavern while bringing the property to the standards of the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design program.

The 125-year-old Hotel Monteleone in New Orleans uses energy-efficient lighting in 50 percent of the property, digital thermostats, 1.6 gallon toilets and energy reduction reminders in guest rooms, recycled paper and soy ink key cards, eco-friendly cleaning supplies, and a towel and linen recycling program, according to Andrea Thornton, director of sales and marketing for the 600-room hotel, which is located in the French Quarter with 25,000 square feet of meeting space. ➤

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"Additionally, the hotel has formed a Green Committee to develop plans to reuse energy, water and solid waste from the hotel. Used amenities and leftover food are donated to local non-profit organizations, and we recently donated nearly 25,000 pounds of bedding for families in need and collected more than 1,900 pounds of newspapers and magazines for recycling."

The Stonewall Jackson Hotel and Conference Center in Staunton, Va., is designated as a Virginia Green property by the state, said Holly Boggs, director of sales and marketing for the 86-year-old property that offers 8,500 square feet of meeting space for groups of up to 400. "Staff take pride in their ability to adhere to environmental standards while creating a high level of service," Boggs said. "The property kitchen grows its own herbs and some vegetables on their rooftop garden. The staff is imaginative and can organize trips to the nearby vineyards on the Staunton trolley and take pride in helping meeting planners stick to their budget without compromising quality. The property is historic, but a \$20 million renovation

means groups can enjoy the ambiance of historic charm as well as modern amenities."

The 122-room Hermitage Hotel in Nashville, Tenn., has joined The Land Trust for Tennessee program where about 500 acres of scenic and historic land will be protected each year by working with willing landowners to preserve the historic, scenic and natural values of their lands, according to Greg Sligh, the hotel's managing director.

The Driskill Hotel in Austin, Texas, is a green meetings facility that was recognized by the City of Austin as a "Green Partner" and a "Waste Smart" business for their efforts to create less waste by recycling and buying recycled products. The hotel was also recognized as a partner with the Clean Air Partners Program in Central Texas, an organization that assists the organization in reducing emissions. The Driskill is also part of the Destination Hotels and Resorts group, which promotes green practices and programs through its Destination Earth program.

The Greenbrier in White Sulphur Springs, W.Va., is working toward offering 100 percent

organic, pesticide-free food options and has already begun using a nearby farm for the majority of its vegetables.

**Green By Design**

As Roch pointed out, many historic hotels, by design and location, are naturally Earth friendly. For example, the Hotel Monteleone's large-scaled windows allow for natural lighting. "We offer ambient light in all of our larger ballrooms," Thornton said. "Two of our rooftop ballrooms overlook the Mississippi River. The Royal Salons have floor-to-ceiling windows opening onto Royal Street, and both the Queen Anne Ballroom and the La Nouvelle Orleans Ballroom have windows."

Boggs explained that since most historic venues are located in downtown areas, attendees have less use for motorized transportation. "The Stonewall Jackson Hotel and Conference Center is located in the heart of historic downtown Staunton. The city is very walkable and guests can easily venture to a variety of restaurants, antiques stores and art galleries. The American Shakespeare Center is right next door. It is the only existing replica of Shakespeare's Blackfriars Theatre, and tickets for performances are available through the hotel. Plus, the property is conveniently located at the crossroads of U.S. Interstates 64 and 81—90 minutes from Richmond, Va., and two hours from Washington."

And since historic venues are often located in historic districts, attendees can be a part of larger preservation efforts. Staunton, Boggs said, "offers beautiful Federal and Greek Revival-styled architecture and nearly 200 buildings designed by architect Thomas Jasper Collins, who worked in various styles during the Victorian era. His firm, T. J. Collins and Sons, is still in business today. The R.R. Smith Center for History and Art, across the street from the hotel, showcases the architecture and art of the era."

**Historically High Tech**

Old is also new, as many historic hotels now offer high-tech options, explained Patty Rouse, complex director of sales for the Hotel Galvez, The Tremont House, both Wyndham Grand Hotels located in Galveston, Texas. "The Hotel Galvez and Tremont House feature modern conveniences expected by today's meeting planners but have retained historic ambiance. Our meeting space includes wireless and wired Internet capability, and we offer an in-house audio/visual company." ■



The Partridge Inn

# Planning a wedding?

Brides can find "something new" at The Partridge Inn in Augusta, Ga., the first hotel in Georgia selected for inclusion in Historic

Hotels of America. Beginning this summer, the 144-room property offers wedding planners the option of renting the entire second floor, which includes access to The Morris Partridge Grand Ballroom, The Champion Suite, The P.I. Bar and Grill, and the quarter mile of verandahs surrounding the outside of the hotel, according to on-site Wedding Planner Andy Cisick. ■