

Small-town rebounds

The Roaring '20s were a boom time for Virginia tourism, especially up and down the scenic Shenandoah Valley.

The proliferation of the automobile, coupled with improved highways, brought visitors with cash to spend. Opulent small hotels sprang up. But in the aftermath of the 1929 stock market crash, many of these gems fell on hard times.

In recent years, there's been a resurgence of historic downtown beauties on walkable downtown main streets. These hotels are loaded with elegance and atmosphere, and their revitalizations have also meant a return to interesting and modernized meeting spaces.

Stonewall Jackson Hotel, Staunton

Restored to its 1924 grandeur, the Stonewall Jackson is once again this city's centerpiece. In its early days, the hotel was the

place for high society in the Shenandoah Valley, and now it's the place for elegant small meetings.

Just steps away are the American Shakespeare Center, art galleries, restaurants, nightlife and fine period homes on Main Street. A block away is the newly expanded Woodrow Wilson

Presidential Library. Wine dinners with Rockbridge Winery can be arranged. The hotel's 8,500 square feet of meeting space includes the Colonnade Ballroom, with

its Wurlitzer organ, and the Shenandoah Ballroom, which accommodates 495. The hotel has 124 guest rooms.

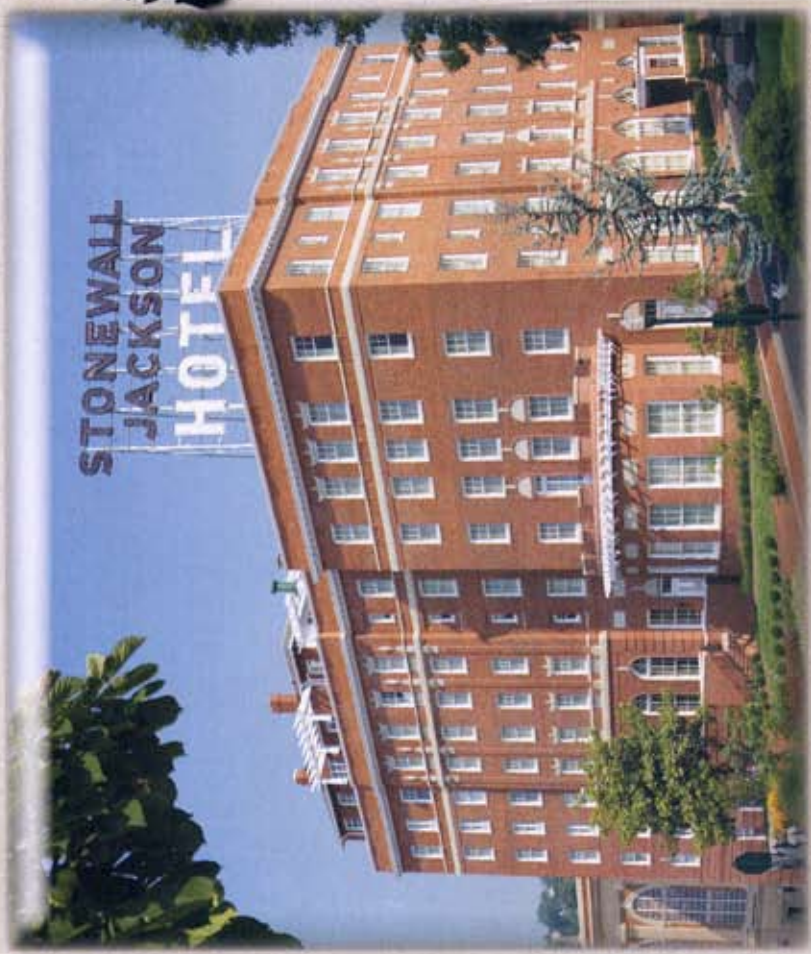
(540) 885-4848
www.stonewalljacksonhotel.com

General Francis Marion Hotel, Marion

Marion's downtown renaissance is anchored by the restoration of this 1927



By John Prince



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The Stonewall Jackson Hotel in downtown Staunton has regained its stature as the city's centerpiece. The Colonnade Ballroom, at left, comes with its own restored Wurlitzer organ.

landmark.

Guests are surrounded by works of regional artists in the hotel's Black Rooster restaurant, whose name comes from the floor-tile motif in its Card Room. Legend holds that the rooster was

last year. Pull up the circular drive, pass through the columned portico and into the elegant lobby, and you'll be transported to the Old South.

The 45 guest rooms, some with fireplaces, have all been updated with rich fabrics and modern amenities. The inn