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Hotel Colorado brings guests back to 19th century with uniform program

BY STEFANI C. O'CONNOR

GLENWOOD SPRINGS, CO—With a history dating back to 1893, it's no wonder the owners and operators of the Hotel Colorado here would want the property to reflect not only a sense of place, but of time.

One of the nation's "Grande Dame" hotels and a member of Historic Hotels of America, the 130-room Hotel Colorado gives guests a sense of life in the late 19th century in both design and décor as well as through an enterprising uniform program that finds front-of-house staff garbed in period costumes.

"We do a lot of historic hotels and we really try to put them back in perspective the way they were," said John Burns, general manager of the Hotel Colorado

and a 15-year veteran with Denver-based Providence Hospitality Partners, Ltd., which manages the hotel for the owner, the Bastian Family of Wichita, KS, which also owns the Plains Hotel in Cheyenne, WY, that Providence manages as well.

For example, front-desk staff wear clothing reminiscent of 1900, with women outfitted in long skirts, leg-o-mutton sleeve blouses and Gibson Girl hairdos while men sport striped shirts with garters on the sleeves, stiff collars and wide or bow ties and vests.

"When guests come into the



hotel we want them to feel like they're walking back into the past," Burns said, noting the hotel is currently looking to have costumed guides give tours of the property dressed as legends such as Titanic survivor "unsinkable" Molly Brown or President Theodore Roosevelt—both of whom were frequent guests at the hotel.

He's also looking to have a doorman costumed as Walter Devereux, the hotel's founder.

At the hotels' food and beverage outlets—Baron's, Polo, Legends, Courtyard Café and the Copper Top Bar—servers

also wear vintage-style designs. They're in multi-color vests and have garters on their sleeves as well as trousers and long white aprons.

History, uniforms go hand in hand at the Hotel CO

continued from page 33

The majority of the garments are locally made—many based on archival photos—and come in at approximately a 30% premium over traditional uniforms. At holiday times, the staff is given more elaborate, seasonally appropriate costumes.

Along with their costumes, as part of their training program staff members are taught the history of the hotel. "Before they get on the floor we want them to know who stayed here in the past (including presidents, gangsters, socialites, movie stars), what's happened at the hotel. We want them to become part of the history of the hotel, not just an employee working here," Burns said.

Currently, back-of-house employees, such as housekeepers, are in traditional uniforms. "We've talked about going back to more of a chambermaid-type of look, but we have not done that at this time," Burns said, noting staff members are involved in costuming decisions. "There are two sides to this: you want them to look the part but you also want to have functionality for the staff."

Burns said the costumes help define the hotel. "The 'uniforming' just creates the image of the hotel," he said, "and it separates the hotel from just your normal box."



Front-of-house staffers at the Hotel Colorado in Glenwood Springs, CO, are outfitted in non-traditional uniforms, adding to the ambiance of the historic 19th century hotel.



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