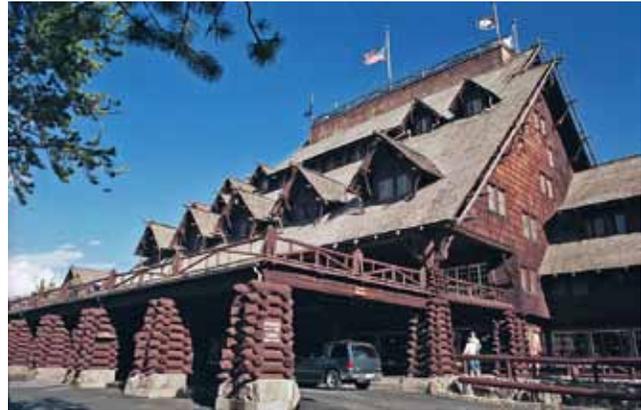


Old Faithful Inn

RESOURCE BRIEF

Significance

Named for the geyser near which its construction began in 1903, the Old Faithful Inn exemplifies the use of rustic architecture at a large scale to complement a natural landscape. The rhyolite that formed Yellowstone's caldera during volcanic upheavals provided the stone for the building's foundation, and local lodgepole pine the logs for its walls. Skilled craftsmen embellished the windows and stairways with gnarled wood selected for its inherent beauty. As designed by architect Robert Reamer, the inn combines rugged materials and organic motifs in a way that expresses both frontier sensibilities and elegance.

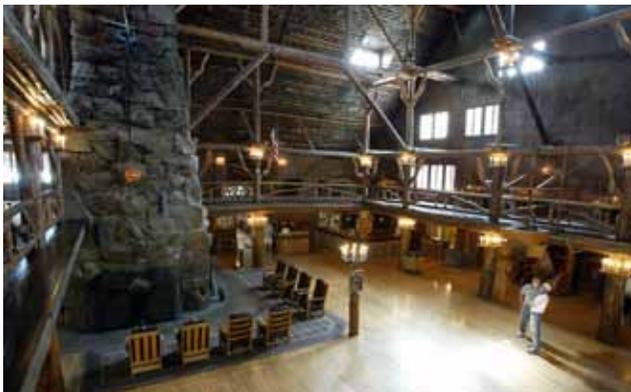


The roof shingles were originally coated with a red mineral paint believed to hinder flammability.

History

After the only hotel in the Upper Geyser Basin hotel burned down in 1894, park officials pressured the Yellowstone Park Association, which held the lease on the property, to replace it with something more substantial. In 1902 the president of the concession, Harry Childs, obtained financing from the Northern Pacific Railroad for a new structure, the first parts of which would become known as the Old House. The lobby, rising six stories beneath a steeply sloped roof, was flanked by a diningroom and two three-story wings containing guest rooms.

When the Old Faithful Inn opened in 1904, it was one of the first hotels in the country with electric lighting, but Reamer designed the light fixtures to look like candlesticks. Both the electricity and the radiators were fueled by a steam generator. Evening meals were accompanied by a string quartet, and dancing was customary six nights a week. Under Reamer's supervision, construction in 1914 and 1925 added two more wings, bringing the inn's total number of guest rooms to about 340.



The lobby fireplace has hearths on all four sides.

The August 1959 Hebgen Lake earthquake shook the Old House from its foundation and damaged the roof and chimneys, but no guests were seriously injured, and after closing early for the winter, the inn opened the following summer. Another evacuation took place in September 1988 when the North Fork Fire destroyed some small buildings nearby, but the Old Faithful Inn was preserved with the help of firefighters, roof sprinklers installed the previous year, and a shift in wind direction.

Current Status

The National Park Service purchased the Old Faithful Inn and other concession-owned buildings in Yellowstone in 1976; the contract to operate lodgings in the park is currently held by Xanterra, Inc. The Old Faithful Historic District, which includes the inn and many of the surrounding buildings, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982. Like the inn, the district is historically significant because of its rustic architecture and its role in the development of concessions to accommodate growing tourism in the early 1900s. The Old Faithful Inn was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1987.

A major renovation program of the Old House was launched in 2004 to meet current building codes and restore the lobby so that it more closely replicates Reamer's original design. The walls and roof were reinforced with steel to make the structure more seismically stable, and electrical, plumbing, and heating systems were replaced and made less conspicuous. With the completion of this program, the Old Faithful Inn is considered to be in good condition. However, some consideration is being given to whether the cedar and redwood shingles should be replaced with more fire resistant materials.