

Old Faithful Inn

Centennial of a Beloved Landmark

Karen Wildung Reinhart



“Suddenly...sitting in a pool of light was the most beautiful object I had ever seen in my life—the Inn. Oh my God, my heart stopped. Upon entering the Inn I can remember going round and round as I looked up and up and up...I swear it was the biggest and most beautiful building I had ever seen.”

*—Cathy Baker Dorn, 1970,
Old Faithful Inn employee*

MILLIONS OF PEOPLE have walked into the lobby of the historic Old Faithful Inn over the past 100 years. Their heads tilt back as eyes look up and up and up—in an instant they are smitten with the creative grandeur of the lodge. Wonder and awe of how such a distinctive structure was built—in the wondrous setting of Yellowstone National Park—may creep into their minds.

Behind all human-made objects of beauty lie stories of creative inspiration, hard work, and appreciation. With the driving force of the railroad and concessioner entrepreneurs, the leadership of expert architect and crew, and the skilled employees that make it all possible, the inn has responded to the needs of the Yellowstone visitor. It has expanded and adapted, but has remained the framework for countless impressions, stories, and adventures. The Old Faithful Inn has charmed a multitude of lives and is unforgettable to nearly all who walked through its massive red doors.



© JEFF HENRY

This article is excerpted from the book *Old Faithful Inn: Crown Jewel of National Park Lodges*, copyright © 2004 by Karen Wildung Reinhart and Jeff Henry. The authors have over 40 years' cumulative experience in Yellowstone National Park.

Since the opening of the Old Faithful Inn in 1904, this hostelry of simple luxury has stood the test of time in a land of extremes: high altitude heat, cold, snow, and wintry winds have relentlessly assaulted its towering presence. Further challenged by its location on the enchanted ground of the Upper Geyser Basin, the inn has survived the effects of earthquakes, wildfire, and the homage of millions of visitors.

The Child and Reamer Team

The story of the Old Faithful Inn begins more than 100 years ago. Visitor tours around the turn of the nineteenth century proceeded according to the location of hotels and lunch stations throughout the park; stagecoaches could only travel limited distances per day. Tourists visited the renowned Upper

“Alone, Child lacked funds to build the long-awaited hotel, but...he thought it prudent to build a hotel near Old Faithful Geyser before his competitors could capitalize on a similar venture.”

Geyser Basin only on a half-day basis—not nearly enough time to stroll casually through the colorful geyser basin, peer into the seemingly endless blue pools, and feel the famous power of Old Faithful Geyser. Hence, park visitors frequently complained about their rigid touring schedule.

Early park regulations disallowed building any structure within one-quarter mile of a natural object of interest. Builders of the rickety predecessors of the inn blatantly ignored this rule. But in 1894, when managers changed the rule to

one-eighth of a mile, the prospect of building a legitimate hotel near the Upper Geyser Basin became more appealing to investors. Even so, it would be another decade before the inn offered its upscale services to park visitors.

The Northern Pacific Railroad had long been involved in the development of Yellowstone National Park's transportation and hotel industries, though before the time of the inn it was a reluctant participant in the less profitable hotel business. The railroad sold its interests in the Yellowstone Park Association in 1901 to three men, in part to avoid building a hotel in the Upper Geyser Basin. After one year, only one of these men, Harry W. Child, retained stock. Alone, Child lacked funds to build the long-awaited hotel, but as president of the Yellowstone Park Association (and the Yellowstone Park Transportation Company), he thought it prudent to build a hotel near

Old Faithful Geyser before his competitors could capitalize on a similar venture. He managed to obtain financial backing from the Northern Pacific Railroad, and the reluctant railroad found itself back in the thick of things. After 21 years of Upper Geyser Basin hotels of questionable quality, railroad money finally made a distinctive and commodious hotel possible.

Harry Child needed to find someone to help make his dreams come true in Yellowstone. In San Diego, California, he discovered the talents of Robert Chambers Reamer, who was employed at an architectural firm there. Reamer was 29 years old when Child brought him to the park to design the railroad station near the park's North Entrance at Gardiner, Montana, and an inn at the Upper Geyser Basin.

Before construction of the hotel could begin, builders needed timber and supplies on the site. In 1901, the Department of the Interior granted Child permission to harvest local building materials for construction of a new hotel. In early December 1902, Child communicated to Northern Pacific officials his intention to haul lumber by horse-drawn sledge over snow to the Upper Geyser Basin—an experiment he hoped would prove



YELLOWSTONE ARCHIVES, YELL 147897

The Shack Hotel, shown in 1887, was built in 1885 by the Yellowstone Park Improvement Company within one-quarter mile of Old Faithful Geyser, which was prohibited. In 1894 the Hayes Act decreased the building limit to one-eighth of a mile. The Shack burned down in 1894 and was replaced by a ramshackle facility, but became the site of the inn in 1903–04.

far-sighted; heavily loaded wagons could mire in spring muck until late June, stalling progress on the new hotel.

Reamer labeled his architectural drawings “Old Faithful Tavern,” though even during the building phase locals branded the hotel the “Old Faithful Inn.” On May 28, 1903, the Department of the Interior approved Reamer’s blueprints.

Even before Reamer’s blueprints received the green light, Child borrowed money for the project. Yellowstone Park Association records indicate that Child secured a \$25,000 loan on March 18, 1903, from the Northern Pacific Railroad, for the Old Faithful Inn and for improvements on the Lake Hotel. Less than two months later, he borrowed \$50,000 more. These loans propelled his hotel projects forward—probably allowing the purchase of preliminary supplies—but by October 6, 1903, Child procured another \$50,000 loan from the railroad. The railroad would eventually loan Child a total of \$200,000 for both projects.

Construction Begins

Two clues have suggested where Child’s men cut the new hotel’s timber. The only timber harvest noted by the army stationed in the Upper Geyser Basin was on June 8, 1903: “patrolled south of station where timber is being cut for new hotel[,] distance about 8 miles.” Lodgepole pine for the inn was also harvested from forests next to the Mesa Pit Road above the Firehole Cascades north of Old Faithful. Construction reportedly began shortly thereafter on June 12.

Perhaps the project had developed enough momentum to begin local timber harvest before June 8. Reamer wrote to a client a few years later: “Any logs that you wish to have the bark on, cut before the sap begins to rise.” To satisfy Reamer’s first-floor requirements for unpeeled logs, perhaps workers did just that. Winter log-gathering over snowy frozen ground would have fit Child’s scheme of “making hay while the skies snowed,” and the logs would have undoubtedly suffered less from scrapes. Once the tree’s life force had risen—about

mid-May—greater care would have been necessary to protect the softer, sap-filled logs from scarring. Men most likely hand-carried the logs to the waiting wagons during June harvest rather than skidding them with horses.

Reamer used huge volcanic rocks quarried from rhyolite cliffs near Black Sand Basin to lend basal support to the Old Faithful Inn. After the army located suitable rock for the new hotel, they inspected the cutting work: “mounted patrol to Black Sand Basin to where masons are cutting rock.” An igneous rock, rhyolite is a relic of the latest cataclysmic volcanic event in Yellowstone country. Just as Yellowstone National Park’s awe-inspiring thermal oddities are its reason for existence, the historic inn too, is anchored by native volcanic boulders, giving visitors a feeling of its profound sense of place.

After laying the foundation, workmen probably fashioned the massive rock fireplace and kitchen next, probably in summer 1903; this would have provided workers with fireplaces for cooking, warmth, and a blacksmith’s forge. Perhaps the kitchen stove served carpenters warm nails to keep frostbite at bay, a clever strategy documented seven winters later during the building of the Canyon Hotel. Even so, an on-site nurse thawed and doctored frostbitten digits during the Canyon Hotel project, evidence of the men’s trials with disagreeable weather. The conveniences of electricity, steam heat, and flush toilets were probably available to inn workers by mid to late winter.

Reamer used native rock and trees to seat the Old Faithful Inn in its Yellowstone environment, but imported other building materials to the job site. Plumbing, electrical, and heating system parts and supplies, cedar and redwood shingles, nails and spikes, window glass, furniture, and more traveled from both the east and west coasts before final incorporation into the inn. Supplies and food for workers and horses were also hauled many miles.

The need for some of these materials and supplies during winter necessitated arduous oversnow travel. Horse teams, drivers, and heavy freight-bearing sleighs delivered goods from



YELLOWSTONE ARCHIVES, YELL 36626

The history of this photo is unknown, but perhaps it is the beginning of the building of the Old Faithful Inn.



NSP

The rock foundation of the inn is believed to have been quarried from cliffs near Black Sand Basin.

the railroad station in Gardiner, Montana, to the Upper Geyser Basin. Each journey by supply-loaded freighter and team took six days round trip. Seven years later, it took 50 drivers and 200 horses to transport one railroad car's goods to the Canyon Hotel building site.

The Old Faithful Inn was further along that winter than some historians have previously thought. A photo of the inn's construction—one of only two—clearly shows the inn's progress as quite advanced in 1903. The framed-up roof and walls tower above the main floor's log construction. There is a revealing lack of snow, indicating a photograph taken in late summer or early fall. The bulk of the structural work was apparently complete before grueling winter weather set in.

Though much of the remaining work was indoors, workers still had to contend with winter's inconveniences. Interior finish work, including electrical, plumbing, and fancy wood and ironwork, would have kept Reamer's team and contractors busy during winter. In early January, plumber E.C. Culley left Livingston, Montana, for the Upper Geyser Basin to complete his contract on the new hotel.

A winter visitor indicated that the inn's progress was advanced less than a month later:

"The new hotel at the Upper Geyser basin is a marvel of beauty and comfort... Guests will be as comfortably located there as in the finest of the modern hotels in New York... The building will be completed in about thirty days... The kitchen is commodious and furnished with every modern contrivance known to the culinary art."

He also described in detail the inn's lobby and dining room.

Reamer and later architects and managers did not insulate the inn, probably because it was never intended to be open during the winter. Even though the building was roughed-in, it would have been a cold workplace in winter's deep sleep. Frigid mornings and biting wind chills assaulted the titanic building, and a mammoth amount of cordwood must have been offered the "fireplace gods." Winter on Yellowstone's volcanic plateau is not kind; 10 feet of snow can accumulate and drift, burying familiar landmarks. Nighttime temperatures can plummet to hazardous lows. Brutal wind chills can further hinder human endeavors. Upper Basin Station weather records of the winter 1903–04 document -20° Fahrenheit, though it is uncertain whether these records are minimum

temperatures. Between 1904 and 1960, the Old Faithful area averaged about 17 inches in snow depth and 17° Fahrenheit in December. The record low during those winters was a sobering -50° Fahrenheit.

Under the creative genius of architect Reamer, approximately 45 hardy artisans of log, stone, and iron erected perhaps this country's most famous western lodge. According to some authorities, some of the workers may have been "on loan" from the railroad, that had a vested interest in the inn's timely completion.

A circle of seasons passed while architect, builders, and contractors worked their magic on the inn. Why urge architect, journeymen, carpenters, blacksmiths, and stone masons to wield their tools—pencil, axe, adz, hammer, saw, anvil, and drawknife—in the cold of winter? According to inn historians Susan Scofield and Jeremy Schmidt, time was of the essence for businessman Child and his railroad backers. Their goal was for the Old Faithful Inn to welcome paying customers that rode the rails to Yellowstone by June of 1904. Perhaps local workers were also eager to have otherwise scarce winter work.

One thing is certain. These men were exceptional in their craft and their tolerance of difficult working conditions. A 1973 National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form noted:

"Men of their stamp, possessing mastery of ax, adz and drawknife, independent and accustomed by their lifestyle to free use of their own initiative, can still be found today—but almost certainly not in sufficient numbers to so quickly build a structure of such dimensions and complexity... despite snow and cold."



YELLOWSTONE ARCHIVES, YELL 40319

Construction of the inn continued all through the long, cold winter of 1903–04.



YELLOWSTONE ARCHIVES, YELL 18746

The only known photo of the inn's construction crew. These hardy men worked June 12, 1903, through June 1, 1904.

The Old Faithful Inn is certainly one of the West's most important icons of park architecture, yet scant clues have been unearthed thus far about its craftsmen. (Blacksmith George W. Colpitts is the exception; see below.) Bernard O. "Pete" Hallin, originally from Spokane, Washington, worked as a carpenter on the inn during its construction. Ten years later, he supervised the construction of the inn's East Wing for the Yellowstone Park Company. Thomas J. and Thomas Clyde Huntsman, father and son carpenters from Missouri, also labored on the inn.

Historians discovered other workers' names in an unusual way. Apparently, on April 23, 1904, a workman tucked a note inside the finial ball of one of the inn's flagpoles. Fifty years later, it was found. Four workmen's names (H. Butler, C. Has-

"remarks—snowed like hell. Drank 4 quarts of booze. Can see about 118 poles."

leman, W. High, and F. Carmody) were scribbled in pencil on a small piece of paper along with: "remarks—snowed like hell. Drank 4 quarts of booze. Can see about 118 poles." Though inn builders accomplished a great deal in a short time, they apparently did take time off.

Some of the workers also made time for clandestine activities. Betty Jane Child recalled a dinner conversation with Bernard "Pete" Hallin in the 1950s. She remembered Pete telling the following unsubstantiated story:

"The [builders] working on the Inn in the winter of 1904 would supplement their income by killing elk and buffalo—which was not allowed—and hide the hides in the far reaches of the Inn until they could get out to Mammoth and sell [them]. This was a good source of additional income to many of the workers."

Clues in other places have also revealed who some of these men were. Engraved into the concrete patio under an "Old House" (the local name for the original 1904 part of the inn) window are the initials "MLG" and the date "Oct. 6, 1903," a lasting testimony to one builder of the inn. "Melvin Campbell" carved his name on a wall in 1903. A scrapbook margin identifies a "McManis" as a stone mason for the inn's fireplace. During the fall of 2000, a workman's signature was found on one of the inn's uppermost window frames. It was written in thick pencil—perhaps a carpenter's pencil—with the name "Albert Rock or Roch[e]" and the date May 7, 1904.

YELLOWSTONE ARCHIVES



The inn in 1912. Here you can see the naval searchlights used to illuminate Old Faithful Geyser (see page 45). There were originally eight flags: the U.S. flag; the state flags of Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming; two that read "Upper Geyser Basin"; and two that read "Old Faithful Inn." Two poles were removed around 1927, and another around 1954. Today there are five.

Historians and fans of the Old Faithful Inn hope that more accounts of these skilled men will emerge from the “woodwork,” giving people a better sense of its story. Perhaps the mystery keeps the magic of the inn alive and well. The Old Faithful Inn captures the imagination of the park visitor like no other building in Yellowstone National Park and, for some, perhaps the entire park system.

Builders of the inn used hand tools but also employed modern power tools of the day, such as power saws and lifts. The signatures of 100-year-old tools mark the passage

of time—still visible on the inn’s walls. A steam-powered generator probably provided electricity for these tools and later supplied heat and hot water for inn guests. These early generators were no doubt fueled by indigenous lodgepole pine (*Pinus contortus*).

Reamer also used lodgepole pine, the predominant tree species of Yellowstone. Throughout the inn, lodgepole pine logs serve as beams, rafters, railings, posts, balconies, balustrades, staircases, and decorative supports. The ceiling was veneered with pine slab wood—perhaps the leftover slivers from the inn’s flat sawn wall logs. A *Haynes Guide* noted “there are over ten thousand logs in its lower story.”

The Old Faithful Inn has been called the “world’s largest log structure.” Indeed, the whole massive structure appears to be constructed entirely of log, lending support to the above claim. However, to dispel that myth, only the first floor of the Old House was constructed of load-bearing unhewn logs. The first floor is eleven logs high; each log was scribe-fitted and saddle-notched, requiring practiced and patient workmanship. Workmen tucked “oakum,” an oily, hemp rope between the logs to serve as chink, chasing away drafts and improving privacy.



This rare H.H. Tammen Co. postcard shows the inn’s original red roof shingles, which were painted to hinder flammability.

“...construction costs for the Old Faithful Inn totalled only about \$140,000—an absurdly low sum in today’s world, especially considering the pleasure and comfort that it has afforded so many visitors and guests.”

The second and third floors were traditional wood frame—a construction scheme much lighter in weight than log. Both floors were cantilevered two feet beyond the first floor’s perimeter, a design that would have been impossible with the continued use of log walls. Reamer kept to his vision of a log-like building by sheathing the two upper floors’ exterior

walls in half-log and cedar shingles respectively. The shingles are 6 inches wide by 36 inches long. The lower two courses, laid out in a diagonally-carved chevron pattern, decorated the windows’ top edge and the second level’s bottom edge with a “fringe” of craftsmanship. This attention to detail was echoed handsomely within.

With the exception of the north wall’s large plate glass windows, the Old Faithful Inn’s windows and their panes vary whimsically in size and shape. Pane shapes creatively bounce among diamonds, squares, and rectangles, and emphasize Reamer’s supposed desire to harmonize with nature’s lack of geometric symmetry. Inn tour guides have theorized that the assorted window sizes and shapes admit light into the lobby like “light through a forest canopy.”

The inn also deviates from the human tendency toward visual balance—dormer placement on the great sloping roof is of an unbalanced nature. Historians and architects don’t know the “why” of the tale but know that the inn’s builders followed different specifications than those on Reamer’s original blueprint. His original drawing illustrated four small dormers flanking the row of windows to the east and two on the west. Their final placement is quite different from his blueprint, perhaps due to lighting and/or stair and landing requirements within.

Of greatest curiosity are the two dormers on the sloping roof just above the third floor. They give the impression of functionality, but do not admit light into the lobby and were apparently built over the finished roof as mere decoration. The remaining windows and dormers above the third floor do not open up into guest rooms either, but they do send soft shafts of sunlight to the cavernous space below. Like any creative process, the Old Faithful Inn evolved as its building progressed. Reamer’s genius logically unfolded with it.

Early hand-colored Haynes postcards indicate that the inn boasted a decidedly red roof. The inn’s creators originally coated the roof’s shingles with a red mineral paint, believed to hinder flammability—a practice that continued through 1932.

COURTESY RUTH QUINN



Burled pine branches and electric candlestick lights, dappled by sunlight filtered through the windows, help to create the woody atmosphere of the inn.

Finishing Touches

Reamer sketched instructions on a shingle and gave directions to his crew to find particular and peculiarly shaped pairs of pine branches. Subsequently, they searched for crooked limbs of lodgepole pine wherever they could find them. Reamer and his team of workers matched up sets of similar bends and twists to create the lobby's picturesque pseudo-supports, giving the lobby its woody atmosphere. These contorted branches may have grown in response to insect and disease invasion (possibly caused by wounds inflicted by neighboring trees or wandering wildlife), or perhaps, due to heavy snowfall.

Reamer awarded the contract for the inn's fancy wrought ironwork to George Wellington Colpitts in December 1903. Born in New Brunswick, Canada, in 1855, Colpitts became a U.S. citizen in 1880, moved to Billings, Montana, and learned the blacksmith trade there. The U.S. Army hired him as a blacksmith in 1886. He worked at Yellowstone Park Headquarters at Mammoth Hot Springs.

Colpitts hammered out the inn's ironwork in his Livingston, Montana, shop. But the Old Faithful Inn iron project was huge, prompting him to open a second shop in Livingston. He hired two additional men and also used space in a Gardiner blacksmith shop. Colpitts owned a traveling forge and probably did some of his ironwork on location.

In addition to forging the ironwork for the lobby's large clock, Colpitts also fashioned four sets of fireplace andirons,

screens, tongs and pokers, and the popcorn popper. He hammered out the front door and dining room hardware, chandelier, porch ceiling lamps, electric candlestick lights that encircled log posts and illuminated guest rooms, guest door numbers, hinges, knobs, and mortise locks, as well as the hefty wrought iron band that wraps the clerk's counter. Colpitts's iron art is a legacy that lives on today, pleasing the public as it did in yesteryear.

Blacksmiths, sawyers, and carpenters did much of the work on location—a practical and cost effective approach to the isolated project. Amazingly, construction costs for the Old Faithful Inn totalled only about



The warmth of the fireplace makes the huge lobby more friendly, and the clock is a work of art in itself.

\$140,000—an absurdly low sum in today’s world, especially considering the pleasure and comfort that it has afforded so many visitors and guests.

The Arts and Crafts Movement, popular in America at the time, influenced the choice of floor coverings and Mission Style furniture for the unpretentious Old Faithful Inn, providing comfort without excessive ornamentation. Child’s wife Adelaide reportedly oversaw the procurement of furniture, rugs, and curtains. The Yellowstone Park Company spent \$25,000 to furnish the inn’s lobby, balconies, porch, and original 140 rooms.

The Old Faithful Inn’s furnishings had already bounced by rail to Gardiner from lands afar. A newspaper article of mid-May revealed: “The hotel at Mammoth Hot Springs is filled with furniture, to be placed in the new hotel at Upper Geyser Basin.” Ten days later, the newspaper reported: “Supplies for the various hotels have been freighted...through bad roads, snow drifts and under the most difficult of conditions. The furniture for the Old Faithful Inn...is not yet completely installed.”

Adelaide Child outfitted the inn’s lobby and balconies with cushioned davenports, settees, armchairs, and rockers, probably made from oak and/or hickory. Substantial leather-topped wooden tables complimented the seating arrangements. Early photos show wicker chairs, rockers, and round wooden tables on the porch and veranda, with spittoons conveniently placed for gentlemen. Guest rooms boasted an iron bedstead, wood-framed mirror, wooden table, chest of drawers, woven chairs, and wash stand.

Some of the original Mission Style pieces from 1904 still grace the Old Faithful Inn. A few heavy oak wooden-armed davenports and chairs in the lobby are original to the inn. The second floor mezzanine’s green octagonal tables originally occupied the upper floor bedrooms but now hold guests’ beverages. Today, a few original drop-front chests of drawers furnish Old House rooms. Refinished versions are used in the gift shop for display. Some of the original wash stands, manufactured by Charles Limbert of Grand Rapids, Michigan, still adorn guest rooms in the Old House. The Old Hickory Chair



The guest rooms had a rustic coziness.



PUBLISHED BY THE ACHERGRAPH CO., CHICAGO RUTH QUINN

The second floor veranda’s rocking chairs and round tables. The deciduous trees were introduced by artists.



COURTESY RUTH QUINN

The volcanic stone “bubbler” (drinking fountain), on the left.

Company of Indiana crafted the original plaited dining room chairs, which are still in use. Chair seats and backs have been rewoven as needed.

Early postcard images of the second floor balcony show double writing desks that have a simpler design than today’s desks. A 1929 furniture inventory listed some of the attractive oak-partner writing desks that are still in service today. Each desk sports a green stained glass lampshade with copper overlay in the shape of pine trees and an owl, coupled with a privacy screen above. In the old days, visitors wrote letters and “souvenir postals” here, much as they do today.



Other accoutrements rounded out the inn's decorative statement. Workmen crafted a "bubbler," a drinking fountain, from volcanic stone to match the registration desk's foundation. Both were originally located in the lobby's southwest corner. Electric candlestick fixtures and chandeliers conveyed a pioneer mood, in keeping with the rest of the building. The lobby's mailbox was a miniature log cabin; the shoeshine stand was of rustic pine as well. On a "grand" scale, a piano promised to fill the inn with music, as it does today during dinner.

Total cost of the construction and furnishings of the Old Faithful Inn in 1904 was a paltry \$165,000. That sum one hundred years later would inflate to approximately 3.2 million dollars; even today, the Old Faithful Inn is an incredible bargain. To compare, the nearby Old Faithful Snow Lodge cost \$28 million in 1998. Though the Snow Lodge is smartly constructed, the Old Faithful Inn is far more compelling in its architectural statement than the newer hostelry. Today's architects intuitively knew the Snow Lodge should not and could never overshadow Reamer's vision—Old Faithful Inn is a log and shingle treasure.

Opening Season

When the inn opened in late spring of 1904, its Upper Geyser Basin location delighted guests immediately, but the comfort and security afforded visitors in the wilds of Yellowstone was a positive too. The heavy plank double doors, their bold red hue the universal color of welcome, suggested the rustic grandeur within. Strapped in heavy wrought iron and bejeweled with more than a hundred iron studs, these 6½-foot by 7-foot doors were supported by heavy iron hinges and fitted with iron lock, key, and peephole grill, all hand-forged by Colpitts and other blacksmiths under the direction of Reamer. The 15-inch key and lock reportedly weighed a hefty 25 pounds. This massive hardware conjured up images of secure medieval castles, while Reamer's practical use of local logs was reminiscent to some of a frontier fort.

On the inside of the double doors, there is a wrought-iron apparatus:

The key to Old Faithful Inn's front door, shown here at actual size. It was removed from service in 1993 because it was breaking down the lock. It has four holes punched through it (three of which can serve as fingerholes). There are traces of black patina on the handle. Courtesy Yellowstone Archives, YELL 88789.



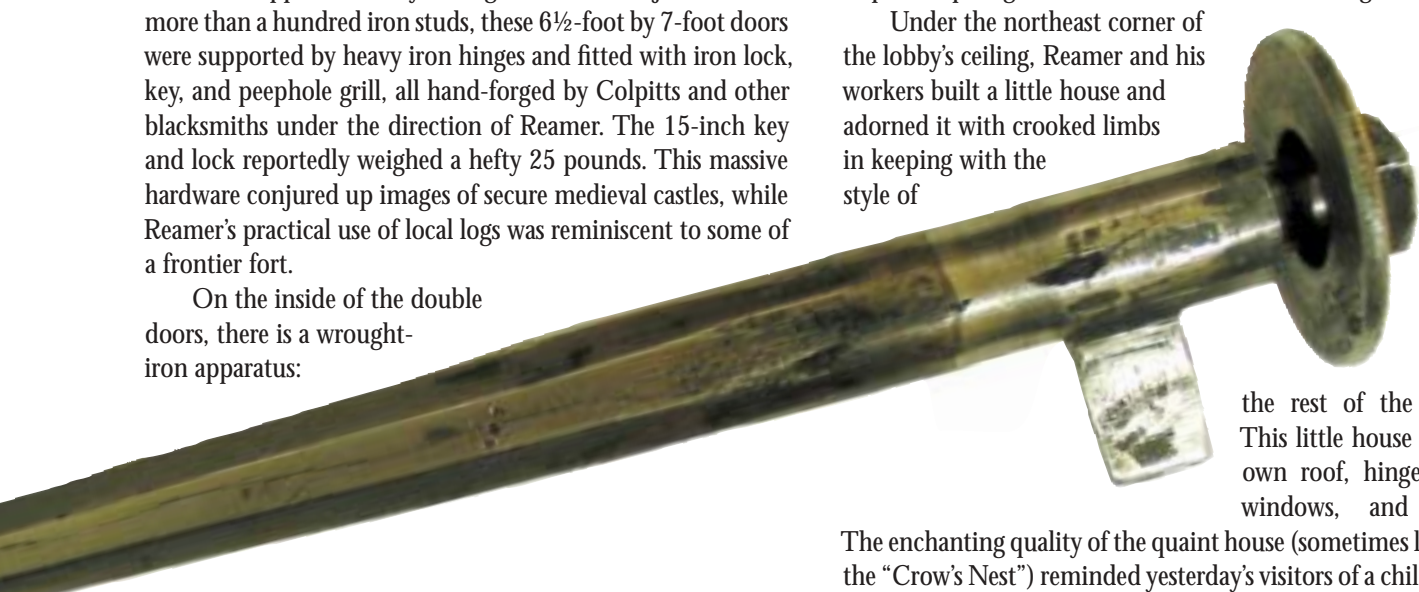
COURTESY RUTH QUINN

The original sunken area around the fireplace felt homey.

an old-fashioned coil spring and round clapper that once served as a door bell for tardy tourists. Local lore has it that in its early days, inn staff locked the doors at night; but if you were a late-arriving registered guest, you merely had to pull the dangling cord that was on the outside of the door to ring the bell and gain admittance to the comforts within.

The cavernous lobby, Reamer's "main office" in the blueprint plans, stretches nearly seventy-seven feet to the ceiling's apex. Balconies with whimsical pine rails and supports encircle the second floor while the third floor balcony services only the lobby's north and east edges. More hand-hewn log stairs and catwalks ascend beyond the third floor and snake up to lofty platforms and a fanciful tiny house. More than one hundred steps transport guests from floor to zenith of this great room.

Under the northeast corner of the lobby's ceiling, Reamer and his workers built a little house and adorned it with crooked limbs in keeping with the style of



the rest of the lobby. This little house has its own roof, hinged airy windows, and door.

The enchanting quality of the quaint house (sometimes labeled the "Crow's Nest") reminded yesterday's visitors of a childhood tree house, real or imagined. Early-day visitors could climb up to this haven through the lobby's forested environs and peer down at goings-on far below. Musicians sometimes entertained from the lofty Crow's Nest and other balconies, as guests celebrated and danced on balconies below.

The inn's lobby space could be overwhelming—making a person feel small and insignificant—but Reamer and Mrs.

Child created a homey feel with the rough, quirky architecture and the rustic, comfortable furniture. Throughout the inn, cozy ornamental nooks grounded the massive space and invited visitors to settle in with a good book or conversation. Strategic lighting added to the pleasing allure of the inn. Ingenious candlestick electric lights and candelabras lent light to the vast yet intimate space around the clock. During daylight hours or moonlit nights, a multitude of windows further illuminated the lobby from without.



YELLOWSTONE ARCHIVES

This photo postcard was taken shortly after the inn opened in 1904.



YELLOWSTONE ARCHIVES, YELL 547

A stagecoach in front of the inn, no known date.



YELLOWSTONE ARCHIVES, YELL 3198

In 1915, Acting Superintendent Brett took a trip around the park to determine the feasibility of letting autos enter.

Visitor Clifford P. Allen remembered his warm welcome by the illustrious Larry Mathews, first manager of the inn. He recalled Larry as an Irishman bedecked in his best hat, a Tipperary (skull cap), who made Allen and other guests feel welcome with his heavy brogue and hearty, warm greeting.

Allen recalled another colorful moment with the inn's first manager. In 1904, church services were held one evening in the inn's lobby. After repeatedly checking his timepiece, manager Mathews announced to the assembled worshippers that Old Faithful was about to erupt. In response to the preacher asking for more time for closing hymn and benediction, Larry said, "You cannot have them[;] the Geezer waits for no mon [man]." That was the end of the church service, as everyone filed out to watch the geyser play under the illumination of the inn's spotlights. According to Allen, "Old Faithful geyser came to time to the minute" and Larry was praised more than the preacher was!

The behemoth, 15½-foot wide, eight-hearth fireplace, crafted from 500 tons of native volcanic stone, sits in the lobby's southeast corner and was a favorite guest gathering place from the beginning. Imagine how workers must have pried the gigantic boulders from their earthly resting spots and hefted them mightily into place, one atop the other, as the monument climbed to soaring heights. The tapering fireplace stretches 42 feet before pushing another 40 feet beyond the roof. Its original exterior stack was brick, sheathed with log cribbing similar to the chunky porch piers. Today, a self-supporting steel stack extends beyond the roof.

Early visitors warmed body and soul at the four large hearths circumventing the stone obelisk. Rocking chairs welcomed guests in a sunken area encircling the fireplace, which helped create the inviting ambience of the inn. Twenty-two years after the inn opened, a concrete floor was poured around the fireplace area to raise it from its original recessed state. Before 1927, a partial rail served to isolate guests from passersby in the cordoned area.

The comforting sounds and smells of fresh popcorn popping often filled the lobby in the hotel's infancy—a welcome treat after a long day of geyser gazing. A railroad historian wrote in 1905:

"Fires of big logs are kept going constantly in the large fireplaces, and every evening a massive specially-made, swinging corn popper is brought into play and the guests regaled with popcorn passed around in a large dishpan."

This after-dinner custom of heaping up a "great snow bank of popcorn" continued at least through 1914. The authentic wrought-iron popper still hangs from the fireplace wall today. Absent is the hollowed-out knot with a hinged lid that used to house a handy shaker of salt.

On the front of the fireplace, the 20-foot-long clock, designed by Reamer and hammered out by Colpitts, still

1959: Nature Challenges the Old Faithful Inn

JUST BEFORE MIDNIGHT on Monday, August 17, 1959, while most inn guests slumbered, one of the most severe earthquakes ever recorded on this continent rattled the Yellowstone area. Its tremendous force measured 7.5 on the Richter scale. The quake's epicenter was one to two miles inside Yellowstone's northwest boundary; seismic waves radiated out from there.

West of the park, a mile of road

that caused havoc upstairs.

Visitors discovered that they were trapped in the park. Many roads were blocked and phone lines were down. To curtail panic, a ranger announced over a patrol car loudspeaker that no one was to leave. Instead, guests were given the option of spending the night in their automobiles or going to the Old Faithful Lodge.

The Old Faithful Inn was closed the day after the earthquake, but surpris-

peppered the roof with 40 holes, and the dining room fireplace cracked to within four feet of its hearth. Two fireplace rocks crashed through the south dining room ceiling and created gaping four-foot holes. They broke sprinkler system pipes (causing serious water damage), then continued through the floor. As a result, the south dining room's oak floor had to be replaced. The fireplace was dismantled down to the arch over the hearth, not to be

“Standing in the inn was like standing on a bowl full of jelly.”

and river was buried in the Madison Canyon when 80 million tons of mountain gave way. The landslide triggered hurricane-strength winds that tossed people, cars, and trees into the air. The waters of the Madison River reversed their natural course, rushing upstream in a cacophony of water, rock, trees, and earth, and completely overwhelmed a campground, Rock Creek, creating Earthquake Lake.

That night, 28 people lost their lives. Nineteen were presumed buried by the slide.

The Old Faithful Inn creaked, groaned, and popped. Broken water pipes in the East Wing sent water running down the hall. The inn was evacuated, but chaotic. Guests on the first floor jumped out windows. A bellman remembered, “Standing in the inn was like standing on a bowl full of jelly.”

A bellman that evening remembered that the relatively quiet lobby suddenly filled with milling guests in various states of attire. Those most anxious to leave eagerly paid the going rate of 20 dollars for bellmen to run up the stairs and down the wobbling halls to hurriedly pack their belongings. Hazardous duty also beckoned bellmen to the bowels of the inn, where they shut off the sprinkler systems



The dining room chimney collapsed and the fireplace cracked in the quake.

ingly, a handful of guests were permitted to occupy rooms in the West Wing on Tuesday, without meal service. An exodus of 7,000 visitors fled the park the next day. Many employees left for home, driving east over passable roads. The inn reopened for two days, then closed for the remainder of the season.

The inn's exterior chimney collapsed and bricks tumbled into all but two of the eight chimney flues. After that, the lobby fireplace could no longer host fires in all the hearths that encircled its girth. The lobby fireplace shifted one and a half inches from plumb. After the quake, crews removed the cribbing and replaced the brick chimney with a 40-foot-high steel stack supported by guy wires.

Shortly after evacuation, the dining room chimney collapsed. Flying bricks

rebuilt until the 1980s.

If the earthquake had rattled the inn earlier or later, many lives might have been lost. Less than three hours before, the dining room had been full of guests. If the quake had hit just 29 minutes later, bellmen and porters, eating sandwiches and soup in the dining room after their shift, might have died or sustained serious injury. The only known injury was a sprained ankle as a

guest leaped out of bed after the first tremor.

Amazingly, the Old Faithful Inn sustained relatively little damage from the quake, though repair work continued for two months after the hotel closed. Sixteen years before the quake, lobby roof purlins had been bolstered with diagonal timbers after 93 inches of snowpack was recorded one winter. Heavy snow loads gave the inn's props—both inside and outside—new purpose: crucial structural integrity.

Restoration architects discovered that the earthquake traveled diagonally through the inn's lobby—from northwest to southeast. The wings helped stabilize the Old House. If the quake had rippled through the lobby south to north, the Old Faithful Inn would probably have been lost.

YS



MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, HANNES FOUNDATION COLLECTION

The lobby filled with guests in 1936, J.E. Haynes photo. Note the musicians in the lower right corner.

evokes curiosity and admiration 100 years later. In September 2000, craftsmen Dave Berghold, Mike Kovacich, and Dick Dysart restored this failing icon. Before this team created its new endless rewind system, generations of bellhops cautiously clambered out on Colpitts's narrow iron scaffolding—nearly three flights up—to wind the clock, putting weekly trust in Colpitts.

The five-foot diameter clock face, its 18-inch, red Roman numerals, the 14-foot pendulum with copper disk, and the wrought-iron counterweights and brackets are all original. The revived clock now has yard-long metal arms (replacing wooden ones) and new works. In the wee hours of the morning or late in the evening when most folks are courting dreams, the loudest sound in the Old Faithful Inn is the slow, two-second rhythmic *tick tock*, helping to mark time in this timeless hostelry.

When the Upper Geyser Basin's grand hotel hosted its first guests in June 1904, a visitor could book a room with bath down the hall for \$4. (A century later, with inflation, this room would cost about \$77.)

Stockholders sang the praises of the inn's opening season. Its total gross earnings topped \$45,000 that season, turning a much-needed profit. Historically, hotel operations in Yellowstone had been a losing prospect for

the Northern Pacific Railroad's interests. Child, the Yellowstone Park Association, architect Reamer, his craftsmen, and of course, the employees and paying guests, all played important roles in the inn's initial success.

Expansions and Renovations

Nearly 14,000 people visited Yellowstone when the inn opened in 1904, but over the next 10 years, their numbers pushed upward to an average of 21,500 visitors annually.

The railroads brought more and more people to the park, so Child commissioned Robert Reamer to design a three-story east wing addition to the inn. Apparently, Reamer decided that the unique architectural statement of the Old House was not to be contested, so the East Wing was designed with a flat roof. Like the Old House, it had a native stone-veneered foundation with exterior walls sheathed in

cedar shingles, and its corners were finished with log cribbing. But the treatment of the interior walls was lath and plaster, which lacked the romance of the Old House's rough sawn plank or half-log walls. The East Wing joined the Old House by way of a two-story passageway, its top floor a breezeway.

For two seasons beginning in 1920, waitresses served hungry guests under a makeshift canvas-roof addition south of the original dining room. Reamer completed a much-needed dining room addition in 1922. Five years later, he built yet another dining addition along the eastern flank of the original dining area. In 1962, this multi-sided addition was converted into today's Bear Pit lounge.



YELLOWSTONE ARCHIVES, YELL 94285

The Bear Pit, with its unique cartoon panels on the walls in back.

The registration desk now sits in the lobby's northeast corner, relocated in 1923 from its original southwest location to decrease congestion in front of the dining room. A bell desk was installed opposite the registration desk that same year. Before 2004, the activity desk in the lobby's southwest corner was the original registration desk. After the 2004 restoration project, a new volcanic rock counter will occupy that space and serve as a hostess stand instead.

The sidewalk immediately outside the front door, under the inn's porte cochere, was originally the drive-through area. While enlarging the lobby in 1927, Reamer pushed the red entrance door, and its wall with large plate glass windows, out approximately 30 feet. He added plate glass windows to the end walls, flooding the one-story-high entrance area with additional natural light. He also removed the exterior walls of five guest rooms and extended the space outward, creating the inn's present gift shop. Visitors today encounter a plaque just a few feet inside the door declaring the inn's establishment as a National Historic Landmark in 1987. The plaque marks the location of the original exterior wall.

Reamer also added the breezy veranda above the porch extension in 1927, and it quickly became a popular place for geyser gazers. This is in contrast to what some historians and architects speculate was Reamer's original intent—to keep inn and geyser basin somewhat separate. This veranda, accessible from the second floor balcony, allows visitors to anticipate Old Faithful Geyser from engraved, long, wooden benches. In very early morning, the veranda's sounds and sights tantalize the senses with nature's gifts. Chickadee songs, robin chirps, and the swish of swallows swooping between the tepee-like cross logs of the third floor dormers, blend in concert against the geyser basin's steaming resonance, like a musical ensemble with background continuo.

The Old Faithful Inn underwent colossal changes in 1927 and 1928. Besides the lobby enlargement, open-air veranda, and east dining room projects, Child requisitioned Reamer to design a west wing addition to the inn, again in response to increased park visitation and railroad pressure. As with the East Wing, Reamer proposed a practical, flat roof design, again not wanting the new annex to compete with the architectural presence of the Old House.

Park officials balked at his design; arriving tourists would see the proposed West Wing simultaneously with the Old House, compromising the towering visual impact of the original building. Letters and telegrams flew among park headquarters in Mammoth Hot Springs, the National Park Service in Washington, D.C., and Reamer's Seattle office in June 1927. Reamer wrote to Child about what he considered unacceptable design changes proposed by officials:

"I told you in my wire that I was as much interested in the appearance of Old Faithful Inn as the Government, and I will go further, and say it means a lot more to me...I hope



The 1927 dining room addition. J.E. Haynes photo, 1928.

that you will pardon me if I write rather feelingly about Old Faithful, but it was my first hotel, Child, and I am a bit sentimental about it."

After the sparks of heated discussion blinked out, park officials gave Reamer's original design the green light. Like the East Wing, it would have cedar shingles covering its exterior and a flat tar roof, but the pitch of the mansard roof's overhang would be steeper than on the East Wing, and would sport a series of small dormers. The four-story West Wing joined the Old House by an enclosed two-story lobby space.

Unlike the Old House and the East Wing, the West Wing was a summer construction project. Construction of the expansive, four-story, Y-shaped West Wing began in late June 1927 and was complete by the season's end, adding 150 rooms with 95 baths to the Old Faithful Inn's ability to please its customers. Now an even more imposing guardian of the geysers and keeper of guests, the Old Faithful Inn boasted an outside length of approximately 836 feet and offered a total of about 340 rooms. Child obtained loans from four railroads for the \$210,000 project.

The railroads were financially faithful to Child's ventures because those projects served them well. Reamer, "the Yellowstone Architect," was also faithful to Child's requests. He returned again and again to the Old Faithful Inn to do additions and renovations. His last project for the inn, the "Beguiling" Bear Pit cocktail lounge (now the Pony Express Snack Shop) was sandwiched between the kitchen and the western edge of the lobby.

The National Park Service's decision to end an 18-year hiatus on liquor sales, made three years after prohibition was lifted nationally in 1933, prompted the Bear Pit project. Reamer commissioned Chicago cartoonist Walter Oehrle to design and etch Douglas-fir panels as wall decorations using a bruin theme. These intricately carved cartoons featured a dancing moose, a bighorn sheep waiter, a pelican guest, and bears as bartender, wait staff, musicians, and customers. The Bear Pit served libations and featured light breakfast and buffet sandwich selections.

When the Bear Pit was relocated to the east dining room in 1962, workers removed, stored, and forgot these panels. Through a stroke of good fortune we can all be thankful for, the panels were unearthed during a 1980s restoration project, and five of them were brought back to life in their rightful home.

In the inn's early days, the bark of the lobby's lodgepole pine forest was intact, giving it an even more "woody" feeling than today. In 1940, the bark was removed; the local legend was that bark peelings created a foot-deep "carpet" on the lobby floor! The logs were debarked to reduce a potential fire hazard or, according to one source, because "too many guests were complaining that the rough logs were snagging their suits and the housekeepers were complaining about how hard it was to dust them." Debarking exposed the intricate lacy tracings of one of Yellowstone National Park's small, unsung creatures—the pine bark beetle. In 1971, workers cleaned all the lobby woodwork with compressed air and meticulously coated it with protective varnish.

Guests today can melt into the inn's timelessness and indulge in self-pampering by using one of two original bathrooms in the east wing of the Old House. Paved in petite black and white tile, the rooms showcase enameled cast-iron accoutrements: claw foot tubs and large sinks with backsplashes. A woven slat table rounds out the antiquated ensemble. Eight Old House rooms have private baths, as they did in 1904—old-fashioned water closets with wall-mounted tanks.

Today, in keeping with an Old House tradition, most guests use "down-the-hall" bathrooms, as they did when the inn first opened. The second and third floors of each Old House wing have complete bathrooms: showers, sinks, and toilets. There is only one shower on the first floor, located in the east wing. Today, the privilege of a bath or shower is part of the price of a room, but the inn's first guests had to pay 50 cents for cleanliness. That may not seem like much, but half a dollar in 1904 is just shy of a 10 dollar bill a century later!

The majority of guests in the East Wing addition also used bathrooms down the hall. Those rooms were not outfitted with bathrooms until 1967. Guest rooms in the Old House and the East Wing were updated with sinks, replacing the old-fashioned pitchers and bowls, in 1924.

Public restrooms probably became more necessary as park visitation increased after World War II, when the Old Faithful Inn itself became a destination. In an attempt to provide more public restrooms, the park superintendent approved pay toilets for the inn in 1947. In March 1948, the director of the National Park Service authorized "three pay toilets in the men's public washroom and five pay toilets in the women's public washroom." One free toilet remained available in each restroom. Auditor Jo Ann Hillard remembered collecting nickels from pay toilets in the 1960s. The women's restroom was on the first floor and the men's was in the basement.

The 2004–06 Renovation Project *A Birthday Present for the Inn*



IN 2001, the National Park Service determined that the Old House needed significant upgrading to meet today's standards of seismic safety. Through the years, walls had been moved or removed to better service guests, but at the sacrifice of Old House stability. The 1959 earthquake separated Old House walls from its foundations and wing additions. The foundation beneath the great fireplace was structurally inadequate.

The restoration team perceived the project, slated for fall 2004, as a "birthday present" for the inn. They will pull the historic hotel back together, anchoring the East and West Wings to the Old House and providing critical support with foundations and new walls. Architect James McDonald projected the inn's condition after the project: "The inn will still move, but will act as one, instead of in pieces."

Planners considered a propane conversion of the great fireplace, but decided that the Old Faithful Inn fireplace should continue to burn lodgepole pine as it has since its creation—a tribute to architect Robert Reamer, his stone masons, and a century of contented guests.

Because of the historic nature of the fireplace, restoration architects will strengthen its base almost invisibly. During the off-season of 2004–2005, they will pour a new foundation beneath the giant hearth, to encompass its existing rubble support system. Four concrete piers will consume the four corner fireplaces, anchoring the fireplace to its new foundation and substantially increasing its seismic stability.

Workers will extricate chimney brick that fell into two of the four large flues during the 1959 earthquake. They will then scour all four large flues clean and line them with a reinforced concrete wall. Future bellhops, like their predecessors, will be able to tend a blaze on all four large hearths, and guests will once again enjoy the glow in Reamer's behemoth masonry heater at the east, west, north, and south.

Reamer apparently envisioned the hearth experience as an intimate one. Early postcards clearly show a sunken and railed area around the fireplace. This cordoned area will be reinstated by the start of the 2005 season.

Carpenters will also replace the worn and weary lobby floor, maple planks installed in 1940. Nails have popped up

through the floor boards, their heads sanded and worn away by the shoes of guests and employees. Since the beginning, guests have paused a few paces inside the inn's welcoming doors and pondered the lobby. Evidence of their wonder, like a well-worn backcountry trail, will be erased by fresh maple boards that guests will tread upon for the first time July 1, 2005.

Old House east wing rooms are slated for renovation by the inn's opening date in summer 2005, and west wing rooms a year later. Though internet service will be available in the breezeway and rotunda connecting the East and West Wings to the Old House wings, Old House rooms will remain without phone jacks, preserving the early-day guest experience.

Workers will increase insulation wherever feasible to boost privacy, and will update electrical and fire suppression systems concurrently with the lobby and room projects. Much of this infrastructure will lie buried in the floor, but guests will still see the antiquated cloth-covered electrical wires, safely disconnected, snaking along logs in the lobby's upper reaches.

By project's end, three of the current guest rooms will become two rooms that are accessible to persons with disabilities. All floors of the Old House, the sunken fireplace area, the gift shop, and the updated and enlarged public restrooms will likewise be accessible, either via the West Wing rotunda elevator or ramps. One housekeeping room and two administrative offices will return to their original purpose as guest rooms. With these changes, the inn will gain two guest rooms, bringing the room count to 329.

By July 1, 2005, returning guests will notice the return of two second-floor mezzanine walls and the outward shift of the Pony Express's east wall into the lobby. These walls will resume their original load-bearing positions and strengthen the inn's defense against earthquakes. The remodeled Pony Express Snack Bar will offer an updated menu, and diners will enjoy the remaining fir-carved cartoon panels, which restoration experts will bring back to life and return to the snack bar. Workers will carve out additional room for the first floor's renovated public restrooms from the snack bar's previous ice cream space. Lobby wanderers will still be able to buy ice cream in the Pony Express, but it will probably be in the shape of "geyser bars."

By the same date, the new registration desk will parallel the old check-in area, extending into the lobby. Its length will double, stretching northward into the 1927-1928 lobby extension area. To increase building stability, a log wall will replace one large plate glass window on the east wall behind the new desk. Guests will be able to check in and make activity reservations at any of the new desk's seven stations.

The bell desk will remain in its current location. A new hostess counter will match the volcanic rock and banded wrought iron of the registration desk (the new desks' stonework will not bulge out at the base, making them more user friendly). The location of the native stone water fountain, or "bubbler," along the lobby's west wall, will once again match views depicted in historic postcards.

During the last phase of the restoration, crews will tackle the exterior of the Old House. The roof and related log work have deteriorated and will be replaced. Workers will add hidden steel supports to the roof for protection against snow loads and earthquakes. As a finishing touch, both wall and roof shingles will be coated with protective oil (the rotted porte cochere floor will be replaced by July 2005). The widow's walk will remain the same except for the removal of the electrical wiring that powered the searchlights before 1948.

The restoration will mimic the efforts of the inn's builders 100 years ago: the work will be done in the off-season. Architects and contractors will brace the historic hotel and themselves against the challenges of winter. The project will begin in mid-October 2004 and end by spring 2006. It will probably approach \$20 million in cost. Guests will continue to occupy the inn during the summer. The process of appreciation begun anew, people will no doubt pause in the same spot that lobby guests did before them.

YS



© JEFF HENRY

To increase seismic stability, the four corner "kindling" fireplaces will be filled in with concrete piers.

The Charm of the Inn

Guest rooms had an easy-going coziness—the rooms' walls and ceilings were wrapped in the warmth of rustic, unfinished wood. Old House first-floor rooms had unpeeled log walls and ceilings, while upper-story rooms had rough-sawn board paneling. Fresh mountain air and the whiff of geysers came in through curtained windows, reminding visitors they were in the world's first national park. Novel lighting, flowers in a vase, rugs, and simple furnishings made guests feel at home. Pegs for parasol, hat, or cloak were usual room embellishments. Each room differed from the next in size and accents, and a few featured cushioned window seats.

Reamer cleverly positioned the Old Faithful Inn so visitors could enjoy a grand view of Old Faithful Geyser upon arrival, but this view wasn't available to guests once inside. Perhaps he was encouraging guests to wander outdoors and engage in the richer pedestrian pilgrimage needed for true appreciation of the geyser basin.

For those visitors who were exploring the wonders of the geyser basin, there was once a bell atop the hotel that declared dinner one-quarter hour before sit-down time. Upon hearing the dinner bell, visitors scurried back to their rooms to freshen up. There they found fresh water in tan, floral-patterned pitchers and bowls on the copper-topped wash stands in their rooms (matching chamber pots rested on the table's bottom shelf). Clean white towels and washcloths hung from the simple rod above.

The original dining room formed half an octagon 62 feet in diameter; later additions would better serve the abundance of guests. The dining room decor was in keeping with the lobby's. It had rustic log walls, a copper and iron chandelier, candlestick electric lights, and a long, patterned rug that led to the large stone fireplace at its southern end. Unlike the hotel lobby, the dining room had log scissor trusses that supported its ceiling. A log partition screened the swinging doors between kitchen and dining room, and is still in use today.

Everyone ate communally, or "family style," from two long tables artfully set with china of a blue willow pattern and sparkling silver. Brass and copper accessories completed the table setting. Ladies and gentlemen dressed in fashionable gowns or suits and ties, a sharp contrast to today's casual attire. A few seats afforded a popular view of Old Faithful



COURTESY RUTH QUINN

A guest in Room 46 of the Old House in earlier days.

Geysers, but after 1913, the East Wing addition blocked that view.

A government inspection report of 1916 gives clues about the dining room, kitchen, and larder. In the dining room, discipline prevailed and service was prompt. Large iceboxes cooled by ammonia and brine held beef, pork, lamb, corned beef, ham and bacon, tongue, and brook trout. There was also a supply of canned goods, fresh vegetables, and fruits. A French chef was in charge of a "competent crew." Meals in the opening season cost the company about 65 cents from larder to table.

Evening meals were accompanied by the soothing sounds of a string quartet from the small gallery overlooking the dining room on the lobby's second floor balcony. Later ensembles changed to include popular music. Seven musicians who played there in the mid-1920s wrote their names for posterity near the tiny balcony. In the 1960s, modern quartets also entertained guests from this balcony, keeping the tradition alive.



MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, HAYNES FOUNDATION COLLECTION

One of the many services available to guests was the barber shop. J.E. Haynes photo, 1916.

After dinner, inn staff arranged regular entertainment for guests' enjoyment or participation. Merriment sometimes included reading poetry or singing around the piano. An account of a "perfect climax to a perfect day" in the inn's "friendly living room" mentioned guests "gathered about the piano [on] the balcony." They sang "the best loved songs of north and south and east and west."

When it was time to dance, early-day rugs were rolled up and, along with furniture, were pushed back to the periphery and the fun began. Musicians reportedly climbed to one of the mezzanines above or to the inn's lofty playhouse to send notes floating through the inn's lovely space to dancers below. The Fred Gebert Orchestra played from the elevated balcony along the inn's front wall from 1928 to 1932. This required musicians to hike with instruments nearly to the Crow's Nest. The group would occasionally play for private dances in the dining room.

Dancing was customary six nights a week at the Old Faithful Inn, as it was later at the Old Faithful Lodge, built in the mid-1920s. By 1937, most dances were held at the lodge recreation hall. However, national sorority conventions occasionally occupied the inn. On these occasions, the lobby filled with lovely girls dressed in formal gowns ready to dance. Small musical ensembles continued to give concerts in the inn on Sunday nights, on an elevated platform in the southwest corner of the lobby, through at least the 1930s. A flyer that advertised guest services for the inn in 1967 mentioned "occasional evening entertainment."

Early on, the Old Faithful Inn was a full-service hotel. It offered services beyond the simple necessities of food, water, and shelter. The front desk staff naturally made reservations for hotels and concessioner tours, but mail, laundry, and tailor services were also available. A guest in need of libation could find stool and bartender in the inn's nether regions from the beginning (at least until prohibition). By 1912, and perhaps earlier, the inn offered other luxuries to its patrons, services they were accustomed to finding in the East's grand hotels. For the guest who was infirm or ill, there was a dispensary and nurse. A guest in need of a trim could get a haircut in the barber shop. "Saddle horses, divided skirts and leggings" were also "for hire." A visitor could communicate by telegram around the world, or by telephone within the park. By 1916, a beauty shop was in operation. Top-shelf cigars, newspapers, and a shoeshine stand were also available.

Additional buildings and employees arrived to provide support services for the inn: an engineer's cottage, carpenter and plumbing shops, and a chicken house, greenhouse, fire pump house, hose house, and laundry facilities. Other necessary infrastructure included sewage and water systems, roads, utility tunnels, bridges, fences, pathways, a wood lot, and horse stables that could accommodate 125 head.

A herd of about 45 milk cows kept the Old Faithful Inn and its northern neighbor, the Fountain Hotel, supplied with fresh milk; their guests consumed 60 to 70 gallons per day in 1914. Three men managed the herd, near the Lower Geyser Basin. Swan Lake Flat was pasture for cattle that supplied fresh

beef to the park's hotels. There was a chicken house just south of the inn that supplied fresh eggs for the dining room. In summer 1914, an ice machine at the inn supplied both geyser basin hotels, making seventy to eighty 100-pound cakes daily to keep perishables cold.

The Old Faithful Inn had a laundry from its beginning. Initially small, it was enlarged in 1926, and a new facility was completed in 1958. It served the inn through 1985. In later years, when not all locations had their own laundry facilities, laundry was trucked from other locations in the park to the inn. (The laundry building still stands behind the inn and is currently used as a staging area for recycling). One million pieces of laundry were done each year at the Old Faithful Inn alone.



MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, HAYNES FOUNDATION COLLECTION

Dancing was customary six nights a week in the lobby. J.E. Haynes photo, 1937.

The number of inn employees varied through the years. A 1914 report tallied 130 employees. According to two later concessioner pamphlets, 250 people worked at the inn after the West Wing's completion. Today, about 350 people work at the inn.

In the Old Faithful Inn, Reamer blended modern comfort with charm, grace, and original rusticity. In his use of native materials and his ability to meet guests' expectations, Reamer's vision was simultaneously practical and grandiose. Anticipating the park's legislative

“As the inn of long ago kept out the unpredictable wilds of Yellowstone, in the twenty-first century it shields people from their stressful lives, helping to build precious and magical memories.”

For many visitors today, the relaxed atmosphere of the Old Faithful Inn settles in after dark, like gently falling snow after winds that brought the storm. There are no more bustling crowds scurrying in and out with cameras and ice cream. Peaceful comfort floats over the inn's guests like a warm blanket. During those last daylight hours at the Old Faithful Inn, it is joyful to read contentedly, play a game, or engage in conversation with friends or family while sipping a beverage from the espresso cart or mezzanine bar. As the inn of long ago kept out the unpredictable wilds of Yellowstone, in the twenty-first century it shields people from their stressful lives, helping to build precious and magical memories.

mandate to achieve both natural preservation and public enjoyment, Reamer intuitively understood that success was realized through balance, years before the National Park Service was created to protect that balance. If Yellowstone National Park is the crown jewel of the park system, then the Old Faithful Inn is the crown jewel of its lodges.

The influence of the Old Faithful Inn has spread beyond the grateful folks who have actually admired and felt its native presence. Reamer's gift of architecture to the world was even more profound. The inn stands as the first large-scale example of what is now called “parkitecture,” or park buildings that are designed to harmonize with nature. Because of that, the Old

Faithful Inn was a recipe for success that future national park architecture emulated. Park architects looked to their natural surroundings for inspiration and adapted their buildings to the tranquil scene the parks were there to protect. Many lodges and other buildings crafted from native log and stone sprang up around the West as a tangible tribute to Reamer's triumph.

The Old Faithful Inn is a keeper of secrets. The wooden walls and floors sometimes creak and groan like lodge-pole pines swaying in a Yellowstone breeze. Perhaps it will speak to you if you stop and listen with care. Few stories of the people that created and treasured the inn a century ago have been told. Inn tour guide Betty Hardy said it well: “The inn is a building of history and a building of mystery.” Historians hope to uncover more of these mysteries of the inn, but perhaps it is these untold stories that draw people to the bosom of the historic hotel.

YS

Endnotes

Space constraints prevent us from listing the numerous citations and sources included in this article as originally submitted. For a complete list, please see the book *Old Faithful Inn: Crown Jewel of National Park Lodges*, © 2004 by Karen Wildung Reinhart and Jeff Henry. Roche Jaune Pictures, Inc., 171 East River Road, Emigrant, Montana 59027, (406) 848-2145, (406) 848-7912, wildhart@imt.net, rochejaune@imt.net.



YELLOWSTONE ARCHIVES, YELL 142573

A large-scale model of the inn housed a restaurant during the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition at the world's fair in San Francisco, California.



© JEFF HENRY

Karen W. Reinhart has worked 12 years as a National Park Service Interpretive Ranger in the Lake area of Yellowstone.