

MEDIA RELEASE

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Historic Park Inn Hotel opening in Mason City IA

MASON CITY – The Historic Park Inn Hotel, the only remaining hotel in the world designed by famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright, will re-open on Aug. 8, 2011 in downtown Mason City following an \$18 million renovation.

The 27-room hotel is expected to draw architecture fans from around the world. Besides restoring the exterior of the building and renovating public areas to their original appearance, guest rooms were equipped with modern conveniences to accommodate business and other pleasure travelers.

The hotel grand opening will be Sept. 10, which will be 101 years to the day that the original Park Inn opened. A series of events leading up to the big day is planned.

“It’s going to be spectacular,” said Jean Marinos, president of Wright on the Park Inc., which owns the property and has overseen the renovation. “This is one of the biggest community projects ever completed in Mason City. We’re looking forward to reopening this beautiful building for everyone to enjoy.”

The renovated hotel will have larger guest rooms and many more amenities than the original. It comprises not just the original Park Inn – so named because it is across from Central Park -- but the adjacent City National Bank building, which was also designed by Wright.

There will be about 8,000-square-feet of conference space, including a ballroom, restaurant and bar, as well as many of the original features built in by Wright, including a ladies parlor, gentlemen’s lounge, billiards room and the Skylight Room, which has Wright-designed art-glass windows.

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Wright, who is considered the most famous architect in United States history, designed the hotel and adjacent bank as additional revenue sources for law offices he was commissioned to design for two prominent Mason City attorneys. The bank and hotel buildings were designed in the Prairie School style, which is typified by flat roofs, large overhangs and geometric designs.

The original hotel was described at its opening in 1910 as a model in cuisine and comfort. "It is a marvelously well-planned hostelry," with all but one guest room facing the outside and featuring French windows, mahogany furniture, brass beds with box mattresses, and lavatories with hot and cold water, the Mason City Globe Gazette reported.

The bank fell on hard times during the 1920s farm crisis and, after a bankruptcy sale in 1926, was remodeled into commercial and retail space, drastically altering its original design. The hotel operated under various ownerships until 1972. It was converted into apartments and eventually was completely vacant, ending up on the top-10 list of most endangered historic properties in Iowa.

For many years, community leaders looked for ways and means to restore the architectural gem. It is one of six Wright-designed hotels. Five were built, but the Historic Park Inn Hotel is now the only one standing. In 2005, the nonprofit Wright on the Park Inc. was created and began raising funds. The project received \$8.2 million from the Vision Iowa program, and \$3.6 million in state tax credits.

Crews have been working on the renovation full-time since January of 2010. Project architect Martha Huntington of Bergland + Cram in Mason City has had to overcome several unexpected design challenges, such as replacement of foundation on the north and east sides of the bank building. A second floor that was added in the bank building had to be removed, and plumbing and mechanical work was complicated by a lack of space.

Henkel Construction Co. was the project manager. The hotel will be run by HPI Partners of Mason City.

Interior designers with Bergland + Cram and HPI researched the interior of the original hotel and chose wall treatments, room designs and furnishings that reflect the original rooms yet offer as much modern convenience and comfort as possible.

One of the guest rooms is being restored almost exactly as it was originally. The two-room "Historic Room" has a sleeping room with a brass bed and desk simulating the original, while the sitting area will have a couch, chair and armoire with a refrigerator, storage and other amenities.

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The other 26 guest rooms – while adhering to the historic design elements -- will be more modern, with wireless Internet, refrigerators and flat-screen TVs.

Most of the rooms will have either a king- or a queen-size bed. Some will have a sleeper sofa as well, and three will be handicapped-accessible. There will also be a bridal suite with a whirlpool, and a business suite.

Guided tours will be available to the public, with special appointments available for motor coach groups.

For more information call Wright on the Park at (641) 423-0689. For room reservations call (800) 659-2220. To learn more about the community visit www.VisitMasonCityIowa.com or contact Visit Mason City at (800) 423-5724.

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