

Flophouse flipping

Boarding house undergoing major makeover as lodge

By **Janine Zúñiga**
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It's been a monumental task for a developer — transforming a 101-year-old boarding house that most recently was a flophouse for transients into an upscale inn.

An underground parking structure has significantly complicated restoration plans for the 1906 Lodge at Coronado Beach, formerly Trant Manor, which is a few blocks from

the Hotel del Coronado.

Still, Dave Gillingham is pushing to complete the 1906 Lodge — with its 17 themed rooms and old-fashioned parlor, veranda and communal dining room — by New Year's Eve.

"We are thinking of having friends and family and dignitaries stay there first as a practice run for the staff," said Gillingham, who is a partner in the project.

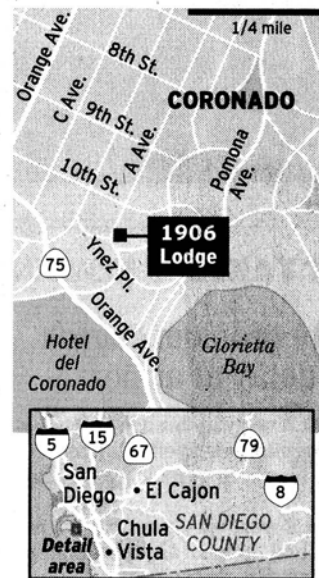
The underground structure hasn't been the only holdup on the project,

which the owners initially had hoped to have completed months ago.

Work crews found a 150-gallon tank while excavating in September. The tank held heating oil for an old boiler and had to be removed at a cost of \$20,000.

Preserving the lodge's historic architecture — especially the windows — has also slowed the restoration process. The owners received local

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Adding garage underground a big challenge

historic status and are seeking national recognition.

"Windows are a super hot-button issue for national preservation," Gillingham said. "We had to take each window out and replace it exactly as it was. We had to log it all, every piece of glass."

The Hotel del Coronado is the only structure in Coronado designated a National Historic Landmark by the National Park Service, and one of 16 in San Diego County.

Under three previous owners since 1906, the boarding house was alternately Grey Court Inn, Palm Court Inn, Palm Lodge Apartments, Bayview Lodge and Trant Manor. It became a home to the Trant family in 1942.

By the 1990s, Trant Manor fell into disrepair and became a magnet for the homeless and drug-addicted. In 2001, the

property was shut down. Gillingham and his partners, who had been in negotiations to lease the property, bought it after the property's trustee, Michael G. Trant Sr., died in 2004.

The lodge will have six rooms in the main building and 11 rooms in an L-shaped cluster of two-story bungalows behind it. Work began in late 2004, when workers removed some smaller structures and cleared debris from inside the lodge. While cleaning, workers found newspapers dating to 1911 and a yearbook from the 1950s.

Gillingham said that as work progressed, architects and engineers discovered the lodge would have to be raised 6 inches to allow for the 12-car underground parking structure, drainage off the lot and underground vehicle access for the disabled.

Raising the lodge required a costly synchronized hydraulic system and time-consuming concrete and steel reinforcement of the structure. Workers had to excavate 15 feet of dirt from nearly the entire lot for the underground structure, which will include meeting rooms, service areas, storage

rooms and innkeeper quarters.

While it took nearly five months to prepare, the actual lift took less than one hour. In December, 14 hydraulic jacks raised the lodge.

The owners are creating two small public parks and narrowing the oversized three-way intersection at A and Adella avenues. When the street work is done, there will be three more parking spots on A Avenue, Gillingham said.

The building was retrofitted to meet earthquake and Americans With Disabilities Act requirements. An elevator was installed near the lodge's central staircase, a centerpiece of the 1906 Lodge. The total cost for the shoring, lifting and retrofitting was \$438,000, Taylor said.

"This is by far the most demanding project I've ever worked on," Gillingham said.

The 1906 Lodge renovation will cost about \$5 million, Gillingham said. King-sized beds, jacuzzi tubs and fireplaces will be in most rooms. The bungalow rooms will have a patio or balcony and a private entrance.

Every room will have its own theme. One will be named after

pioneering horticulturalist Kate Sessions, who ran a nursery in Coronado, and another after Frederick Winchester, a previous owner. The rooms will feature historic photos and period-appropriate furniture.

The new owners — Coronado residents Dave and Sue Gillingham, Joe and Holly Janiewicz, Mark and Pam Gould and Rick and Maria Kenney — are the fourth owners of the property. They believe the building was designed by famous local architects William Sterling Hebbard and Irving Gill.

"There is a lot of anecdotal evidence that suggests they were involved," Dave Gillingham said. "We've heard this could have been their last project together."

Meanwhile, friends and neighbors already are requesting reservations. The Gillinghams say rooms will go for about \$400 a night.

"People already want to be the first to stay here," Sue Gillingham said.

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The former Trant Manor at the corner of A and Adella avenues in Coronado is being renovated with 17 themed rooms and bungalows, an old-fashioned parlor, veranda and underground parking. The owners hope to open by New Year's Eve. *Daryl Peveto / Union-Tribune*