

A RESTORED RETREAT

A Historic Hotel Renovation Recycles Building Materials and Antique Products

BY KIM A. O'CONNELL



LIKE A SET PIECE IN AN OLD WESTERN MOVIE, the Tallman Hotel was once a dusty and forgotten relic in a northern California ghost town called Upper Lake. In the 19th century, Upper Lake had been a thriving tourist destination, famous for its nearby mineral springs and its proximity to Clear Lake, the largest freshwater body in the state. Thick forests fed the region's sawmills, and the town boasted several shops, stores and factories. By the 1960s, however, these industries had mostly dried up, and the town floundered.

Today, Upper Lake is on the cusp of a renaissance, thanks to a comprehensive restoration of the Tallman Hotel by owners Bernard and Lynne Butcher. In addition to restoring and expanding the 1890s structure and its adjacent saloon, the Butchers were committed to reusing and recycling as much original building material as possible. The hotel complex also is energy efficient, using solar energy and a geoexchange heating and cooling system.

"Lynne and I are environmentally conscious," Bernard Butcher says. "That is why we wanted to renovate the hotel instead of do new construction. We wanted to preserve the soul of the old building."



WOODWORKING

In the late 19th century, Upper Lake pioneer Rufus Tallman built a hotel, livery stable and saloon to serve tourists visiting the area. When his first hotel was destroyed by fire in 1895, Tallman built a new structure in its place, using redwood and other hardwoods that were widely available in the area. When the Butchers purchased the property in 2003, the hotel still was in relatively good condition. However, the hotel suffered somewhat from slapdash construction and decorating. In some places, rooms had paper-thin walls, and various styles of wallpaper were attached to cheesecloth that had been tacked onto the wood.

Assembling a team of contractors and designers familiar with restoration and reuse, the Butchers planned to restore the hotel to its historic appearance; reconstruct the adjacent Blue Wing Saloon and Café, which had been demolished in the 1920s; and add modern conveniences. Eventually, the Butchers plan about 15 cottages to be located around a swimming pool. Throughout the project, the design and construction team aimed to keep the original wooden character of the Tallman hotel while strengthening the structure and bringing it to current standards.

"Every place we could, we used the old wood," says Tom Carter, owner of Lakeport, Calif.-based Carter Construction, general contractor for the project. "Before I would let any of my guys use a board, we laid it all out and used the best pieces in the most visible locations. The old growth wood has the most beautiful grains."

The restoration project involved removing a veranda and two room additions that had deteriorated over time. In addition, the entire hotel was moved 7 1/2 feet (2.3 m)

off its unstable foundation to a new concrete block foundation, and new garden rooms were added. To replicate the historic rustic appearance of the hotel complex while minimizing the use of virgin lumber, the front bar and tabletops for the restaurant and conference table in the board room were milled from a century-old walnut tree on the property, which had been taken down for construction. The Butchers also purchased a circa-1870s walnut "back bar" to match the new front bar.

"Our guiding principles were save what you can, repair it, copy the details and put it back into place," says Ian

Murray, the San Francisco-based design architect who worked closely with interior designer Candra Scott & Anderson, San Francisco. "We translated that into the new projects like the reconstructed saloon. We always determined whether there was anything old to start with or anything already milled we could salvage."

This commitment to reuse translated to other aspects of the project, as well. After the contractors uncovered some antique bottles while laying trenches for new construction, the Butchers hired a local salvager known as "Bottle Bob" Holt to recover what he could. Holt salvaged approximately 100 antique bottles, a cocked and rusted Colt revolver, and other items, some of which will be displayed in the hotel and café. In addition, the team purchased antique plumbing fixtures for use in guest rooms and recycled a 1930-era boiler, adapting it for use as an outdoor grill.





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— Ian Murray, architect

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

The Tallman Hotel complex also uses an extensive geothermal system for heating and cooling. Also known as a geothermal or ground-source heat-pumping system, the geothermal system works via a matrix of underground pipes that channel the natural heat of the earth, which remains at fairly constant temperature at certain points below the earth's surface. In the winter, the pipes pump water into the complex, where indoor compressors and heat exchangers concentrate this energy and release it as heat. In the summer, the system is reversed, with excess heat drawn down and out of the complex. More

than 40 300-foot- (90-m-) deep wells were dug to accommodate the pipes and pumps.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) states that geothermal systems are among the most environmentally efficient heating and cooling systems available. EPA reports such

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systems reduce energy consumption by more than 40 percent over air-source heat pumps (which rely on outside air as a heat source) and by more than 70 percent when compared with traditional electric heating. Geothermal systems also typically use less than half the refrigerant that typical air conditioners require.

"This area gets quite hot in the summertime, so we knew air conditioning would be critical," Butcher says. "Energy costs are going nowhere but up, so we were always attuned to that."

The geothermal system is augmented by a 10-kilowatt (kW) solar energy system that has been installed on the restaurant roof and another 15 to 20 kW array planned for a covered parking structure. A major challenge for the design team was to disguise these mechanical systems within the historic framework of the hotel and saloon.

"There was so much underground piping with the geothermal system, but all the modern technology here is hidden," Carter says. "This system is really refined, and yet it is still a young technology. The improvements are going to be amazing in the future." 🌱

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▶ RESTORATION TEAM

- **GENERAL CONTRACTOR** / CARTER CONSTRUCTION, Lakeport, Calif., (707) 263-0211
- **DESIGN ARCHITECT** / IAN MURRAY DESIGN, San Francisco, (415) 255-9007
- **INTERIOR DESIGNER** / CANDRA SCOTT & ANDERSON, San Francisco, www.csaad.com
- **HOTEL MANAGER** / BROUGHTON HOSPITALITY GROUP, Huntington Beach, Calif., www.broughtonhospitality.com



▶ MANUFACTURERS

- **GEOEXCHANGE SYSTEM** / EARTH ENERGY SYSTEMS, Santa Rosa, Calif., www.earthenergysystems.com, and MELINE ENGINEERING, Sacramento, California, www.meline.com
- **SOLAR ENERGY** / ADVANCE POWER, Calpella, Calif., www.advancepower.net
- **RECYCLED WOOD PRODUCTS** / BEYOND WASTE, Cotati, Calif., www.beyondwaste.com
- **ANTIQUE PLUMBING** / THE ELEGANT BOWL, Upper Lake, Calif., www.antiqueplumbingfixtures.com

