



Restoring a National Treasure

The Chateau at the Oregon Caves - A National Historic Landmark

In his "Report on Oregon Caves" in 1934, B.R. Finch wrote that "...a perfect feeling of homelike comfort but still of quiet dignity...Descending the landing...one is amazed to hear, blending with the music of the orchestra, the falls of the mountain stream which wends its way across this [dining] room and onto the sea..." The Chateau is a National Historic Landmark, a source of income for a rural region, the building at the heart of a community, and a daily gathering place for the residents of Cave Junction. The Friends of the Oregon Caves and Chateau (Friends) have worked tirelessly in partnership with the National Park Service (NPS) since 2007 to restore the Chateau by honoring the magic of the original building and considering the modern guest.

The first project the Friends undertook was the model room in 2009. The Chateau's historic Monterey furniture collection is so well made it has lasted over 89 years. When the restoration is complete, the Chateau will be the only lodge in the NPS with its original furniture in the guest rooms. This original collection will be restored and other pieces will be acquired or replicated to complement the original collection allowing for adjustments to meet the needs of the modern guest. The Friends' most recent project, completed in July of 2022, was the successful restoration of 8 of the Chateau's original exterior doors.

In February 2022, the Friends and the NPS worked together to integrate structural plans with prior plans for preserving and restoring the historic integrity of the building. The Chateau is desperately in need of a Life, Safety, Accessibility, and Seismic upgrade, as well as Stabilization to solve structural deficiencies. Analysis is currently underway on the expected cost for that work. The Friends have raised 1.8 million of the estimated additional 4 million dollars needed to ensure that the vital historic character of the Chateau is maintained.

In March 2023, the NPS paused the restoration until additional funding could be secured. This is a critical time to make sure the restoration effort does not lose the momentum created to this point. To gain the needed funding - the Oregon Caves will present an updated restoration plan to the NPS in February 2024. The Friends are working to gain support both financially and with letters to show citizen, local government and community support for this important project. The Chateau has now been closed since 2018. The community, the region and the Oregon Caves National Monument are stressed and want to assure funding can be secured.

The Friends are determined that the magic of the Oregon Caves Chateau be beautifully restored and ready to welcome guests into its lobby while big band music plays over modern speakers. Guests will be amazed that 89-year-old furniture can be so comfortable and they will tell everyone they know to plan an overnight trip to enjoy the splendor of the national monument that has a national landmark lodge with a stream running through its dining room.

The Friends of the Oregon Caves and Chateau is a non-profit organization cooperating with the National Park Service in the preservation, stewardship and improvement of the cultural and natural resources of the Oregon Caves National Monument and Preserve.

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