

# NEW DEAL FOR PARKS

## CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS CELEBRATES ITS 75TH ANNIVERSARY

It's a sunny spring day in Virginia's Prince William Forest Park, a log cabin filled with a dozen or so radios from the 1920s and '30s, one of them a build-it-yourself crystal set. "Building your own" was popular during the Depression, often out of necessity. The simple receiver, with nothing to enhance its signal, testifies to a time when people didn't give up and learned how to make do. And now, during "1930s heritage day" at the national park, visitors see ample evidence of that resilience in the heart of a project borne of Depression-era ingenuity: a camp constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps.

for urban dwellers and impoverished inner-city children. The areas were designed to give the kids "a place to have a summer camp and give them some opportunities they otherwise wouldn't have," says Andrew Tremel of Prince William Forest Park (for-



**Far left: Enlistee grades a road in Mammoth Cave National Park, around 1935. Near left: Surveying for a new road for the Blue Ridge Parkway.**

**THE CCC, AS THE CORPS WAS KNOWN, WAS ONE OF MANY PROGRAMS INSTITUTED UNDER PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT'S** New Deal to help the fallen nation get back on its feet. Established in 1933 as part of the Emergency Conservation Work Act, the CCC worked for both the needy and the environment—by sending armies of unemployed young men into forests and parks across the country. In the program's nine years, over 500,000 enlistees developed 52,000 acres of public campgrounds, laid 89,000 miles of telephone lines, and planted more than 2 billion trees. The state park system was still a new idea, but by the time the program ended in 1942, there were 800 new state parks.

"The effort of focusing three and a half million young men on our natural resources was never more dramatic," says Sally Prouty, president of the Corps Network, a nonprofit that represents 113 service and conservation corps groups still active today—"direct descendants" of the CCC—including the Public Lands Corps, cosponsored by the National Park Service.

Writes Stan Cohen in *The Tree Army*, a CCC history: "It has been said that without CCC help, it would have taken fifty years to accomplish what was done in nine." Not only did state parks benefit, so did the national forests—and parks. So much so that the 1930s are to some the "golden years" of the National Park Service.

The Army managed the camps, but their superintendents worked with NPS staff to devise projects that could be completed during the typical six-month CCC enlistment period. Around 50 national park sites benefited. Kentucky's Mammoth Cave National Park and Virginia's Shenandoah National Park (both authorized in 1926) weren't established until after the CCC had built many of their facilities and trails.

Perhaps the most notable NPS achievements were the Recreation Demonstration Areas—though only two remain in the National Park System today—created to buy land from needy farmers to build recreational areas

merly Chopawamsic Recreation Demonstration Area), located in what are now the outer suburbs of Washington, DC.

Prince William, one of 46 former RDAs—most are now state parks—was one of the nation's largest before becoming a public park in 1946. Over 2,000 CCC enlistees built five cabin camps here on 11,000 acres, some still used by park visitors today just as they were in the 1930s and '40s. Blending unobtrusively into the wooded surroundings, the clusters showcase the dominant style of CCC architecture, known as rustic or "parkitecture." The hand-hewn structures, sparse and open, were a hit with the public. "They blended with the environment—that was really attractive to

**Right: Oil painting by Harry Rossoll—a Forest Service illustrator best known for creating Smoky the Bear—first exhibited in 1939 at the Golden Gate International Exposition in San Francisco.**



FAR LEFT: MAMMOTH CAVE NP MUSEUM COLLECTIONS/NPS. NEAR LEFT: ALLAN RINEHART/NPS HISTORY COLLECTION. RIGHT: CCC LEGACY



LEFT AND FAR RIGHT: MAMMOTH CAVE NP MUSEUM COLLECTIONS/NPS, NEAR RIGHT: DAVID ANDREWS/NPS (2)

people, yet they were functional too,” says Linda Flint McClelland—a National Park Service historian and author of *Building the National Parks*—adding that naturalistic rockwork is also a signature element of the CCC style, the craftsmanship so fine it is hard to tell sometimes what is natural and what is manmade.

**WHO WERE THE YOUNG MEN ENLISTING IN THE CCC? RANGING IN AGE FROM 18 to 25 years, they came from families on relief and without much in the way of job skills or educational opportunities. The CCC gave them both. Operating under the motto of “We Can Take It,” the men**



**Left: Lloyd Vincent, an enrollee at Mammoth Cave, sharpens a saw. Above: Details of cabins at Prince William Forest Park.**

learned and practiced the building trades: carpentry, bridge and road construction, electrical wiring, plumbing, surveying, and more. Sometimes they learned from LEMs—local experienced men—hired by the National Park Service. The program also offered extension courses in auto mechanics, English, forestry, psychology, and journalism. Some of the enrollees spent their free time—in temporary barracks where they lived in the camps—working on the CCC national newspaper, *Happy Days*.

The families received aid too, a whopping \$25 of the \$30 an enlistee earned each month. Labor groups thought the dollar-a-day salary too little, but the men got food, clothing, housing, and medical care all free of charge. For some, it was a lot better than the conditions they came from. “The average enlistee gained 25 pounds during his six months of service,” Tremel points out.

There was a lot of hunger to go around. With unemployment at an all-time high after the 1929 stock market crash—and with a drought turning much of the nation’s breadbasket into a dust bowl—President Roosevelt received 15 million letters from desperate Americans asking for assistance. But they wanted to work in exchange for the help, and the New Deal programs gave them a sense of accomplishment. “It makes us feel like American citizens to earn our own living,” wrote one employee of the Works Progress Administration, asking the president to continue the program.



**Above: Carving a sign with a chisel and hammer at Mammoth Cave, around 1937.**

**FIRST LADY ELEANOR ROOSEVELT TRIED TO FIND EMPLOYMENT FOR JOBLESS women, too. With the help of social worker Frances Perkins, she opened Camp Tera, at Bear Mountain State Park in New York’s Hudson Highlands, despite being mostly scoffed at for the idea. The project, nevertheless, slowly took off and by 1936 there were 90 “She She She Camps.” Though not official CCC camps and much smaller, they did serve over 8,000 unemployed women. No conservation work was involved, though, as the women focused on domestic skills such as cooking, cleaning, and sewing.**

Not only did the CCC and the New Deal have a positive impact on the broke and the hungry, they also changed the way the country looked at conservation—and the arts. Franklin D. Roosevelt, much like his cousin and former president Theodore Roosevelt, was a devout conservationist who wanted to get people involved in better-

ing the natural world. Suddenly, conservation was for everyone. “The effect of the New Deal programs was amazing, not just on conservation, but on arts and culture, too” says Catherine Lavoie, chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey of the National Park Service—the only New Deal cultural program still in existence—which also celebrates its 75th anniversary this year. Founded under the FDR Civil Works Administration and Works Progress Administration, HABS was created in part to help out-of-work architects, its intention to document the story of America through its built environment.

Environmentalism wasn’t the only thing stifled by the impending war—so was the New Deal. The CCC began to wind down in early 1940, becoming defense-oriented in preparation for the upcoming conflict. Camps sprung up at military bases as enlistees were pressed into building airfields and artillery ranges. After Pearl Harbor, all the camps were offered to either the Army or the Red Cross. In June of 1942, despite Roosevelt’s wishes, Congress abolished funding; the program was officially over. With the economy on the rebound—and many of the 18 to 25 year olds heading over-



**“THE EFFECT OF THE NEW DEAL PROGRAMS WAS AMAZING, NOT JUST ON CONSERVATION, BUT ON ARTS AND CULTURE, TOO” SAYS CATHERINE LAVOIE, CHIEF OF THE HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE—THE ONLY NEW DEAL CULTURAL PROGRAM STILL IN EXISTENCE—WHICH ALSO CELEBRATES ITS 75TH ANNIVERSARY THIS YEAR.**

**Above left:** Cabin cluster in one of the five CCC-built camps at Prince William Forest Park. **Center:** A CCC enlistee fits logs for the La Croix Guard Station in Minnesota’s Superior National Forest. **Above right:** Building a culvert headwall at Mammoth Cave. **Right:** Cabin detail at Prince William Forest Park.

**NOT ONLY DID PEOPLE GET INTERESTED IN THEIR ENVIRONMENT, THEY STARTED** thinking about it differently, too. As the CCC effort stretched into the late 1930s, criticism arose that instead of conserving parks, the work was overdeveloping them. “The corps created a national debate,” says Neil Maher, author of *Nature’s New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement* and an associate professor in the federated history department at the New Jersey Institute of Technology, a joint program with Rutgers. Maher—who spoke on the CCC’s legacy at a recent conference on the past and future of the parks in Charlottesville, Virginia—points out that the Wilderness Society arose directly out of this debate, along with a new term: environmentalism. Though World War II stifled the start of the movement of the same name—which went into full swing in the 1960s, the era it is synonymous with—the spark had been ignited.

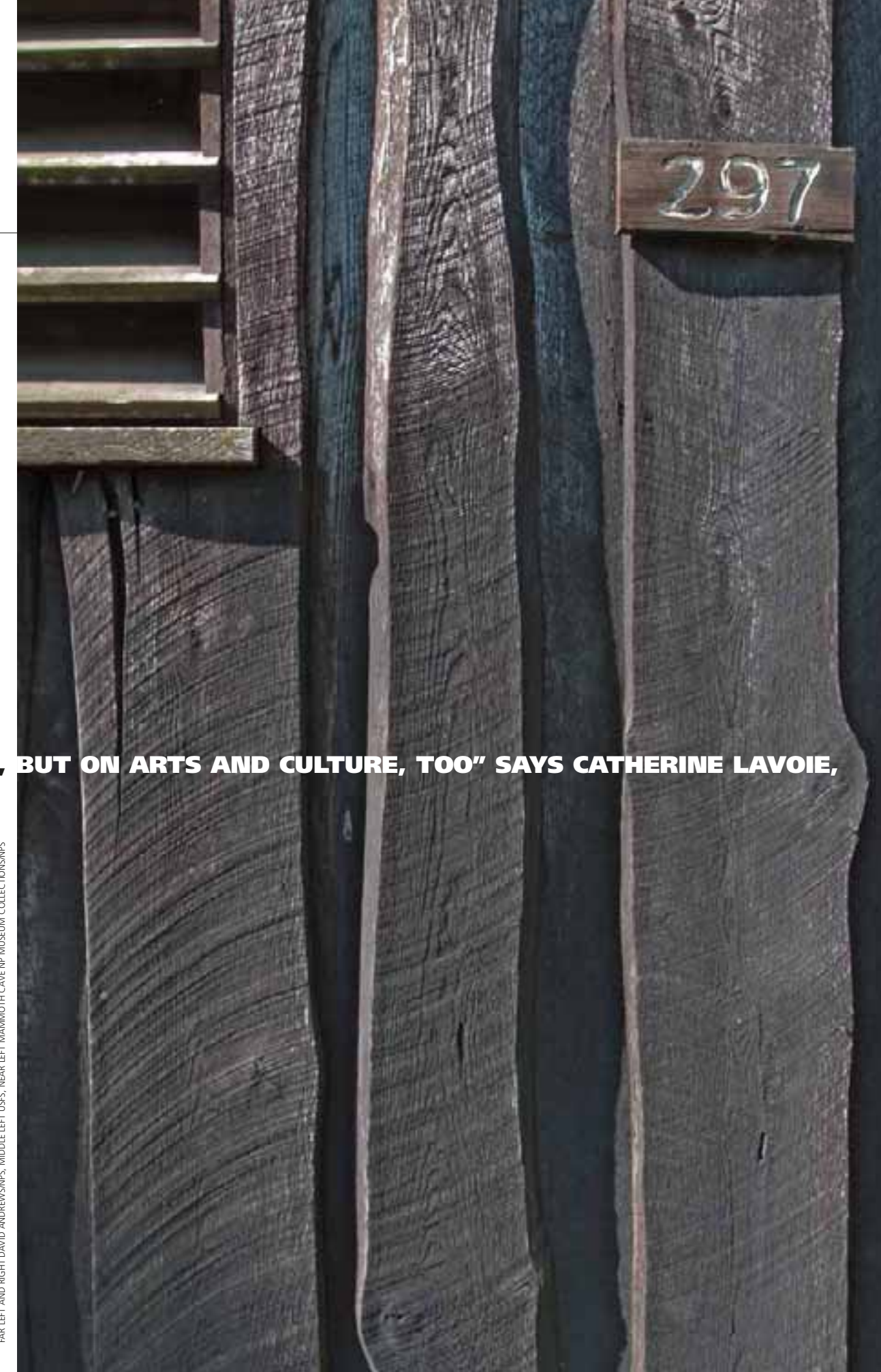
seas to fight—the need for the program was no longer as intense.

But it had done the job. Thousands of young men were given the chance to earn a steady paycheck and the education to earn a decent living. “They were given an opportunity to amount to something, to have some success after their term of enlistment,” Tremel says.

**ALTHOUGH MANY PEOPLE TODAY AREN’T FAMILIAR WITH THE CCC, ITS LEGACY** endures through the sheer abundance of recreational facilities that are still with us—along with the stories of the men who built them. “When we are enjoying public lands, there are so many reminders, even 75 years later,” Prouty says.

To learn more about Prince William Forest Park, go to [www.nps.gov/prwi/](http://www.nps.gov/prwi/); about Mammoth Cave National Park, go to [www.nps.gov/maca/](http://www.nps.gov/maca/). For inquiries about CCC-related National Register or National Historic Landmark listings, please e-mail [nr\\_reference@nps.gov](mailto:nr_reference@nps.gov). To find out more about getting involved with a service corps, go to the Corps Network website at [www.corpsnetwork.org](http://www.corpsnetwork.org), or call (202) 737-6272. Contact Neil Maher at [maher@njit.edu](mailto:maher@njit.edu). HABS has conducted a study of CCC sites in the Washington, DC, area; for more information, email [lisa\\_davidson@nps.gov](mailto:lisa_davidson@nps.gov).

FAR LEFT AND RIGHT DAVID ANDREWS/NPS, MIDDLE LEFT USFS, NEAR LEFT MAMMOTH CAVE NP MUSEUM COLLECTIONS/NPS





**OVER 200 TREES WERE PLANTED, LAND WAS SET ASIDE AS A PRESERVE, AND MONUMENTS WERE FRAMED WITH FOLIAGE.**

# MUSEUM WITHOUT WALLS

PASTORAL TREASURE BECOMES A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

First-time visitors to Cincinnati's Spring Grove Cemetery might be surprised by what they see. Yes, there are plenty of old headstones to read, but among and around them is a wealth of art, too. So much so that the cemetery's 733 acres are often called a "museum without walls." The landscape itself is a work of art. "There's a blend of artwork, sculptures, and memorials, along with a tremendous collection of plant material," says Thomas Smith, executive vice president of the cemetery. That's one reason why Spring Grove, the nation's second largest resting place, became a national historic landmark last year.

**THE NHL NOMINATION ALSO NOTES THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WHAT DESIGNER Adolph Strauch called his "landscape lawn plan"—a style that cemeteries around the world emulated. "People were trying to figure out a balance between nature and monuments at the time," says David Charles Sloane, author of *The Last Great Necessity: Cemeteries in American History*. "He took Spring Grove a step towards doing that."**

The non-denominational graveyard was consecrated in 1845 as one of the Midwest's first rural cemeteries, mirroring a movement sweeping the nation as more and more communities—awed by the picturesque Mount Auburn Cemetery, founded in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1831 and now an NHL—wanted a place outside the city to bury their dead. Before the movement, most people were buried in the many town churchyards, which were getting crowded

**THE CINCINNATI HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY LED IN THE CREATION OF SPRING Grove, the group determined that the city have a picturesque cemetery of its own. Its members visited noted cemeteries across America and Europe to gather design ideas and inspiration. They didn't just want nice landscaping—they wanted beauty comparable to that of Père-Lachaise, the famous Paris graveyard. And the rest of Cincinnati was right on board, putting down \$20,000 for plots before construction even started.**

But by the 1850s, cemetery executives were concerned that the plethora of monuments and memorials was starting to detract from the picturesque idea, a view that was heartily supported by Strauch when he offered to redesign Spring Grove in 1856, which he said had "the appearance of a marble yard where monuments are for sale."



**VISITORS TODAY CAN STILL SEE "LANDSCAPE PICTURES" AMONG THE PONDS, THE ARCHITECTURE, AND THE MEMORIALS.**

**Far left: Snow-covered monument in Cincinnati's Spring Grove Cemetery. Near left: Infrared photo of Rock Bridge crossing over Geyser Lake, one of the cemetery's 12 ponds.**

and did not have the abundant scenery to recommend them. Cincinnati, stricken by cholera epidemics in both the 1830s and 1840s, was no exception to the trend.

Like most graveyards of the time, Spring Grove was garden-like, each grave a little plot with its own set of garden accessories—from flowers and trellises to paths lined with shells and crushed

LEFT WAYNE BRUNS, RIGHT JIM KRAMER

marble. Some graves even had toys and knickknacks. Instead of looking beautiful, the place looked cluttered. Strauch limited the height of future monuments and gravestones, removing fences around plots and banishing private gardeners. “He turned it from a mosaic into a centralized landscape,” Sloane says.

But the biggest changes were the horticultural ones, with the goal to give the graveyard a more naturalistic appearance. Over 200 trees were planted, land was set aside as a preserve, and monuments were framed with foliage. Visitors today can still see “landscape pictures” among the ponds, the architecture, and the memorials.

“Strauch’s work symbolizes the shift from the picturesque to the beautiful,” Sloane says. The new look, once finished, was simplified and pastoral. The place received international praise—Frederick Law Olmsted called it a source of inspiration and the directors of London’s Abney Park Cemetery declared it “the finest cemetery in the world.”

**TODAY, HORTICULTURE STILLS PLAYS A KEY ROLE. “IF ANYTHING, IT’S INTENSIFIED,”** Smith says. Renamed the Spring Grove Cemetery & Arboretum in the 1980s, its grounds are home to over 1,200 species including 23 champion trees, making it a favorite study spot for landscape design classes. Around 150 trees and shrubs are planted each year, along with 4,200 annuals and 20,000 bulbs.

Strauch, a Prussian immigrant who landed in Cincinnati by happenstance after missing a train to Niagara Falls from Texas, is buried in the cemetery along with its 200,000 other eternal occupants, including Abraham Lincoln’s Secretary of the Treasury, Salmon P. Chase, U.S. Attorney General Henry Stanberry, and Quaker abolitionist Levi Coffin. His grave is on one of the cemetery’s islands, not too far from the Romanesque Revival-style Norman Chapel, built in 1880, which annually has three to four times more weddings than funerals.

Spring Grove also has a variety of tours to show off its beauty to the public, among them a nighttime event called the “Full Moon Tour.” Ghost hunters occasionally ask permission to come after hours in search of spirits, but “no one to my knowledge has ever seen any,” Sloane says.

To learn more about Spring Grove, go to [www.springgrove.com](http://www.springgrove.com). To learn more about the National Historic Landmarks Program, or to see a list of its 2,500 sites, visit the National Park Service website at [www.nps.gov/history/nhl](http://www.nps.gov/history/nhl).



JIM BROCKMAN

Above: One of several historic mausoleums in Cincinnati’s Spring Grove Cemetery

# A Storied Hotel's Second Chance

History Comes Alive Through Reopening of Pennsylvania Mountain Retreat

**MOST PRESERVATION TAX INCENTIVE PROJECTS FIND THEIR WAY INTO FOLDERS** when all is finished, but one recent project, the Bedford Springs Resort, took up an entire box. It required a lot of reports and photos to document the renovation of the six-building connected structure, stretching almost a quarter of a mile. Especially one that spent 22 years abandoned.



**Above: The hotel today. Right: Circa 1840 pen and sepia drawing by German immigrant artist Augustus Kollner.**

The national historic landmark, in Bedford, Pennsylvania, was shuttered in 1986 and not in good shape when Bedford Resort Partners LTD first saw it in 1998. Animals had moved in, flood damage was rotting the beams, and the lack of maintenance had taken its toll on the 2,200-acre property. But envisioning what it could be, the group bought it for \$8 million anyway. The hotel reopened in July 2007. "We saw it as a rare opportunity to restore one of the country's great mineral springs properties," says Keith Evans, the group's managing partner. "There aren't that many left." Says Mindy Crawford, executive director of Preservation Pennsylvania, "It's an incredibly impressive structure—just the sheer size makes it unique."

The 23-month rehabilitation, done by 3 North design firm, returned the hotel to its circa 1905 appearance. Structural damage was repaired, asbestos removed, masonry repointed, a new spa addition built, and several outbuildings stabilized. "We would pull something off and not really be sure why it had still been standing," Evans says of the renovation's structural challenges. Since the property is a certified historic structure, the project income producing,

and the renovation in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, the group got a 20 percent tax credit towards the \$120 million price tag.

**JOHN ANDERSON, A BEDFORD SPRINGS DOCTOR, OPENED THE RESORT IN 1803.** With its location near seven springs, he knew he could lure travelers with promises of the curative waters. By the mid-1800s, it was known as the "Carlsbad of America," a reference to the European spa city. "Everyone who was anyone stayed there," Crawford says.

President James Buchanan, who stayed often in the summer, was especially fond of the place. He received the first transatlantic cable here, from Britain's Queen Victoria, which he read aloud to the guests. The hotel played host to six other presidents and a variety of other figures, some seen in the 400 vintage photographs hanging in the halls.

The resort's success continued well into the 1900s, with the spring water still a huge attraction. But the Great Depression, when so many could no longer afford long vacations, started a decline, sending the resort into foreclosure in the 1930s. In the 1940s, it wasn't a hotel at all but used for war-related purposes.

Revived as a resort in the 1950s, it continued to attract tourists, but with increasing difficulty as the resort era died, and in 1986 finally closed its doors, seemingly for good. Now, however, guests are flocking to it once again, with plenty of demand right from the reopening.

**HISTORY IS EVERYWHERE IN THE 216-ROOM HOTEL, FROM THE 1800S COLOR** postcards to the windowpanes where brides etched their names to see if their wedding ring diamonds were real. But today's guests aren't roughing it in any sense. Each guestroom includes a high-definition television, an iPod docking station, and wireless internet access. In the Springs Eternal spa, guests enjoy the famous spring waters through various baths and detox treatments.

Perhaps the best thing is the fact that the hotel is no longer a lonely eyesore along the highway, but instead a thriving getaway, says William Defibaugh, president of the Bedford Historical Society. "I think this time it's here to stay," he says.

To learn more about the NPS federal historic rehabilitation tax incentives program, which has leveraged more than \$45 billion in private investment since 1976, go to [www.nps.gov/hps/tps/tax/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/tax/index.htm).

LEFT PITTSBURGH HISTORY & LANDMARKS FOUNDATION, RIGHT COURTESY SPANIERMAN GALLERY, LLC

