

## Reflecting on 120+ Years of History

There's a saying to know your future you must know your past. On the 120th Anniversary of the Highland Inn, formerly known as the Hotel Monterey, The Recorder will be diving into the Inn's rich history to give readers a glimpse of the past and a vision for the future of the historic property.

The Highland Inn first opened as the Hotel Monterey on Sept. 30, 1904, by Silas W. Crummett. The hotel was known as the "Pride of the Mountains" and marketed as a resort in the cooler climate to folks in the cities of Virginia.

The Feb. 2, 1961, issue of The Recorder featured a letter to the editor from R. H. Crummett Sr., son of S.W. Crummett who built the building. According to the letter, the building contractors were Eutsler Bros. Of Grottoes, who built it for \$6,000. "This was one of the first buildings to be put up in Monterey that was storm sheeted diagonally with water-proof paper under the ship lap weather boarding," the letter read. Crummett wrote that he helped with the lathe work and Charles Diggs mixed and carried mortar.

"That spring, my parents entertained Henry Ford, Harvey Firestone, Thomas A. Edison, and John Burrows for a day on their way to Hot Springs and White Sulphur Springs and other parts of West Virginia," the letter said, but does not say if these important personages were entertained in the inn or the family home.



In its early years, visitors to the hotel were written up in The Recorder, such as a Fourth of July party and a wedding in 1906. The Crummetts retired after six years, selling the hotel to H.P. Patterson, who already owned the only other hotel in Monterey, the Hotel Commercial. Personal tragedies hit both families in the coming years, but the hotel prospered. John Philip Sousa spent a night there in 1913. The Pattersons sold the hotel to

J.E. Carwell in 1919 due to ongoing health issues. Charles Pullin, brother of Mrs. Carwell, was part owner.

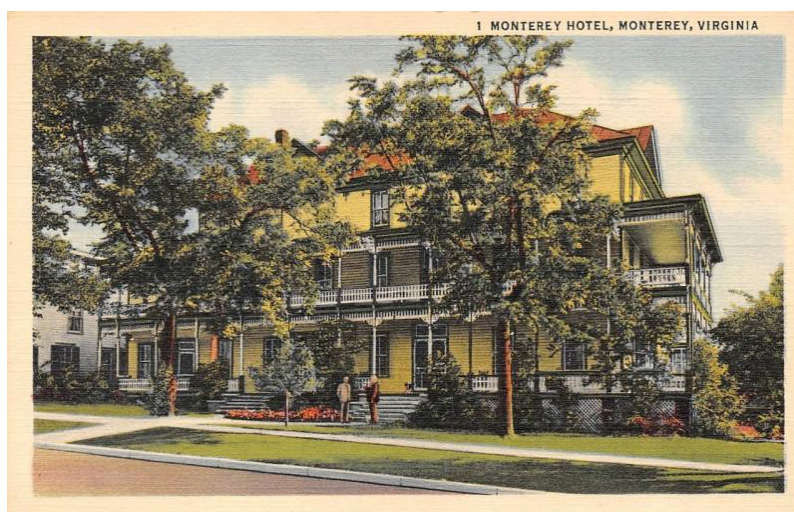
A fire broke out in the attic on Jan. 20, 1920. Recorder editor and publisher H.B. Wood wrote, "The room in which the fire originated was a sort of plunder room and there were articles of cast-off clothing, carpets and etc. at one end of the room where the blaze started. This was not close to any chimney or flue and there was no heating device in this room. All of which adds to the mystery of its origin, all sorts of theories being advanced spontaneous combustion, mice, matches and incendiarism."

Tragedy continued that month, with Mrs. Carwell's death. Wood reported: "... at supper Mrs. Carwell seemed unusually cheerful, laying plans for the repairing of damage done to the house and again taking charge of her boarders. She became ill, however, before the meal was over, grew worse steadily, and in spite of all that could be done by her family and physician, died. The Recorder continued "Death was due to poison, presumably ptomaine, as she had eaten some canned sweet potatoes."

Mr. Carwell closed the hotel after his wife's death, upsetting the public. Two boarding houses picked up business, but questions continued in September of 1920. "J.E. Carwell, joint owner of the Hotel Monterey, disappeared mysteriously about 1:30 o'clock last Saturday night, and the circumstances surrounding his disappearance are such as to cause much speculation and concern,"

The Recorder reported. Carwell had continued to live in a room at the closed hotel and worked in R.M. Trimble's store but disappeared. His room was searched and found intact except for a pistol. Relatives in the eastern part of the county said they had no clue to his whereabouts. Search parties were sent out without success, with The Recorder reporting, "his disappearance is as complete as if the earth had swallowed him up."

Both suicide and foul play were suspected. His skeletal remains were found that December by two boys hunting rabbits on Monterey Mountain. No conclusion was reached as to who or what caused the gunshot to the back of his skull.



While he was missing, actors working on the silent picture "Tol'able David" moved into the Hotel Monterey for four months. In March of 1922, the former co-owner of the hotel, Charles Pullin, purchased the property for \$8,000 at a commissioner's sale. A lawsuit was filed against the sale, and a special commissioner awarded the property to the only other bidder, W.H. Boggs of Franklin, WV.

Boggs repaired the hotel, changed the name to The New Monterey, and reopened on Aug. 15, 1922.

After Boggs married, he leased the hotel to Mr. and Mrs. Bass of Burlington, N.C. After their lease ended, it was managed for one year by Lucy Whitelaw, then for a year by Mr. and Mrs. Dever. Management was then turned over to Mr. and Mrs. H.M. Lockridge of Marlinton, W.Va., who made improvements and hosted events that once again made news in The Recorder.

A lawsuit involving Charles Pullin and the Carwell heirs meant the hotel was sold once again in 1927. A series of people owned it over the next several years, including A.T. Moore, S.D. Timberlake Jr., and C.S. and Nellie J. Showalter, who ran the hotel for the next 30 years. After her death in 1969, the hotel was sold to the Williamses who owned it for eight years. From 1971, the chain of title is as follows: Robert B. and Ruth N. Willis, 1971-77; Monterey Hotel Co. Inc., 1977-81; Pioneer Properties, Inc., 1981-85; Highland Inn Limited Partnership, 1985-86; First and Citizens Bank, 1986; John V. and Eleanor Husler, 1986-87; John L. and Joanne M. Crow, 1987-90; Michael W. and Cynthia Peel Strand, 1990-02; Gregg and Debbie Morse, 2002-2014.

In 1973, The Virginia Historical Landmarks Commission added the building then known as the Monterey Hotel to the historic landmarks register, but an economic downturn 40 years later closed its doors once again. According to the March 2015 edition of The Recorder, "Most other business owners and leaders recognized that closing the inn last fall was a heart-breaking decision for Old Dominion Hotels and the Morse family, who had done their level best to stay afloat.

The brutal economic recession affected their business, as it has so many others."

No one wanted the old lady to die, non-profits have come to the rescue.

"In an extraordinary and swift move, The Highland Center jumped into action only weeks after the inn's doors were closed last October and purchased the property by late February. With Old Dominion's assistance, all the rooms booked for Maple Festival were honored — the place was filled and open again," The Recorder said in 2015. The Highland Inn served as home to many offices from the Highland Center was that building was renovated.



The Highland Center ran the inn for a time, but that was not really in the center's mission, so it began to look for options.



In May 2019, The Highland Center sold the inn to the Blue Grass Resource Center (BGRC) for \$300,000. The purchase followed a 60-day study period arrangement between The Highland Center and the Highland County Economic Development Authority (EDA).

The BGRC took over the purchase negotiation from the EDA and accepted the assignment of the inn's renovation project on April 8, 2019, after reconstituting its board of directors.

The BGRC has secured a series of grants for renovations. Phase 1 of the work began in the summer of 2020. The exterior stabilization was completed in 2021 at a cost of \$1.1 million, supported by donations and grants.

In December 2022, the Highland County Board of Supervisors voted to give \$150,000 to the Blue Grass Resource Center for the inn's renovation. Since then, BGRC has raised 51 percent of the funds necessary for the second phase of the renovation through a mix of private donations and grants.

Phase 2 of the Inn's restoration will involve interior renovations, the addition of two handicapped-accessible rooms on the ground floor of the Inn, new HVAC, plumbing and electrical systems, and a larger deck at the rear.

Architects estimate that phase II renovations will take approximately 12-14 months to complete and cost roughly \$5 million. BGRC continues to look for and apply for additional grants that will help bring the Inn back into service. The goal is to reopen the historic property on West Main Street in Monterey and provide a place for visitors to stay for a night – or several.



The inn plans on working with area partners on packages that will attract everyday visitors as well as midweek, regional conferences and reunions.

To help Blue Grass Resource Center plan for the inn's reopening and operation, Jarek Mika, CEO of Highland Hospitality Group LLC of Warm Springs, signed a memorandum of understanding in July of 2023 to become the inn's operator. This partnership will allow a seasoned lodging professional to run the day-to-day operations of the inn and restaurant and allow BGRC to retain ownership of the property.

BGRC will continue to work on funding strategies that will move the restoration project forward. Individuals interested in learning more about the project or making a donation towards the revitalization effort can visit [highlandinnrenovation.org](http://highlandinnrenovation.org).