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New England Construction celebrates re-opening of \$20 million restoration project of the Weekapaug Inn

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After two years of painstaking planning, design, and construction (and some blood sweat and tears along the way) - the Weekapaug Inn, sister property to the Ocean House, officially opened to the awe of its first guests after a \$20 million historic restoration.

After much of the original Inn (constructed in 1899) and coastline was decimated in the Hurricane of 1938, the Buffum family rebuilt the Inn in a new location, which opened in 1939. The Inn was open for 108 years until it closed in 2007 for renovations. In April 2010, Charles Royce and Langdon Wheeler, principals of Weekapaug Inn & Cottages LLC, purchased the Inn from James and Dee Dee Buffum, fourth-generation operators of the property. New England Construction was engaged as construction manager, restoring the Inn to incorporate many updated features, while preserving the character and historic charm of the original structure. "New England Construction was chosen as construction manager for the historic restoration of the Weekapaug Inn because of their depth of experience, quality of work and commitment to their clients. It was the right choice," said Edward Wetherill, owner's representative.

The Inn, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, was required to adhere to many strict standards to maintain this prestigious classification. Inspectors from the RI Historic Preservation and Heritage Commission marked and recorded original construction and furnishings. The exact footprint of the original 1939 structure, as well as the entire exterior have been faithfully restored, as have many of the rooms and much of the original interior architecture. The exterior of the Inn still boasts a classic, shingle-style exterior coupled with red-cedar shingled walls with dark trim and wide porches that locals have come to recognize. "During Construction, we led weekend tours of the construction for months. The sessions typically attracted more than 100 people, with many locals participating every few weeks to gauge the progress," said Michelle Wade, spokesperson for Ocean House/Weekapaug Inn. "The team from New England Construction ensured that we were prepared every Saturday with safe pathways and consistently communicated any changes of the tour to us."

The Inn offers sweeping views of Block Island Sound, Quonochontaug Pond and lush gardens from its 27 guest rooms and four two-bedroom signature suites. Each of the impeccably appointed guest rooms features a unique color palette and a fresh use of existing Inn furnishings, while incorporating luxurious amenities including private bathrooms with radiant heated marble floors, heated towel racks and deep soaking tubs. The four signature suites include a spacious sitting area, full kitchen, dining room, two-bedrooms, a study with a fireplace, as well as a private elevator and entrance. With the hope of ensuring that guests truly "unplug," the rooms do not include a television (one can be provided upon request) or telephone - although the Inn does offer WIFI Internet accessibility. An original communication system has been restored with intercom features to reach the front desk.

The two main dining areas incorporate hardwood maple floors from the original Inn and the main reception area features hand-painted murals of the natural landscape of Quonochontaug Pond, wild life and the like.

The Inn now has a private waste treatment facility to properly handle sanitary sewer requirements in this environmentally sensitive environment. The new three-lane, 25-yard lap pool is heated from the geothermal wells on site and is adjacent to the Fenway Cottage which houses the fitness center, exercise room and three guest rooms on the second floor. While performing work on the foundation, several boulders were unearthed and subsequently utilized to construct a new amphitheater adjacent to the outdoor fireplace. A newly constructed bath house encompasses showers, changing areas and a restaurant. Guests of the Inn, as well as Weekapaug residents can enjoy access to Weekapaug and Ocean House beach.

"When you have an opportunity to be a part of a project of this magnitude, there is a great sense of responsibility to protect and preserve the history of the building, while taking every opportunity to incorporate modern systems and amenities expected in a high quality seaside resort," said John Pignataro, New England Construction's president & COO. "Bringing this Inn back to life required a great vision, a creative design team and the best subcontractors, suppliers and vendors this region has to offer. It has been a privilege and a pleasure to part of a team who transformed this spectacular Inn; returning a century-old treasure and tradition to the village of Weekapaug and the Rhode Island shore."

Photography courtesy of Chip Riegel.

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