



About the Chateau at the Oregon Caves

The Chateau is a six-story structure with a reinforced concrete foundation and a superstructure of wood frame construction with enormous post and beam interior supports. The building spans a small gorge and a great deal of the building's mass is banked into that depression. The first floor houses mechanical equipment. The second contains basement storage areas. The dining room, coffee shop and kitchen areas are on the third floor--at the same level as the lower trout pool grotto at the immediate head of the gorge. The fourth floor is at road level and contains the entrance lobby and some hotel rooms. The two upper stories have additional hotel rooms.

Exterior walls are shiplap siding sheathed with cedar bark, giving the building a shaggy, rustic appearance. The main gable roofs are steeply pitched and are pierced by shed-roof dormers further broken by gabled-roof dormers.

The large lobby on the fourth floor of the building (entered from the level of the parking lot) contains a huge double fireplace of marble construction. The exposed wood beams of enormous size (about 18x24 inches) are supported by peeled log posts with 30-inch diameters. The applied wood decoration at the joints simulates wood joinery and is non-structural. The subtle gray appearance of the wood is due to airborne particles of cement that settled on the wood when sacks were beaten on the posts during construction. Portions of the wood not initially tinted by the cement were colored to match. Leading from the lobby to the downstairs dining room and coffee shop and upstairs to hotel rooms, is a handsome rustic staircase of oak, madrone, and pine or fir. The open stairwell shows off the structure of the stairs to great advantage. The simple oak treads rest on pairs of notched log stringers. The logs are nearly the same size as the log posts of the lobby. The darker wood of the peeled madrone balusters and the lighter wood of the handrails and newel posts are smooth-finished but retain softened gnarls and knots. The natural light from the plate-glass windows that overlook the trout pool only emphasize the stairwell and draw the viewer's eye from the darker portions of the lobby.

The most common interior wall finish is a wainscoting of heartwood from the California redwood with pressed fiberboard above. The fiberboard is original and only altered by the application of fire retardant. New carpeting covers the original linoleum of the lobby and the hallways and rooms of the hotel. The large plate glass windows in the lobby, main stairwell and dining room are topped with twenty-six lights above. All of the windows in the building are wood frame and vary from eight-over-one double hung to nine-light casements.

The dining room and coffee shop on the third floor retain considerable original character. The stream is still channeled through the dining room. The original wood floor in the dining room, damaged by flood during the 1960s, has been



replaced with a plywood sub floor and carpeting. New wooden partitions (removable) that are jigsaw in a pattern reminiscent of Bavarian/Swiss chalet detailing separate sections of a gift gallery next to the dining room. The open room configuration remains. The coffee shop, completed in 1937 retains its birch and maple counters and knotty-pine paneling. The present tile floor replaces the original oak parquet floor that was damaged during the 1963 flood.

Much of the arts-and-crafts style furniture throughout the building is original and in excellent condition. The wood furniture has leather and metal detailing, and some sports painted designs. Period wrought iron and brass lamps, sconces, and chandeliers light the interior. Other interior decoration includes Kiser tinted photographs of local scenes. Some of the hardware on the doors is also original.

One of the reasons the building fits so well with its setting is that most of the construction materials are local in origin. The principal timbers were cut a short distance away and trimmed at a mill on Greyback Creek. The cedar bark for the vertical siding came from a railroad-tie cutting operation nearby. The marble for the stone fireplace was blasted out of adjacent bedrock while the development was under construction.

Changes to the building have been minimal. A new sprinkler system with cast-iron pipes was added to the building in 1955.

Flood damage in 1963 necessitated the changes to flooring materials in the dining room and coffee shop. The steel fire escapes with their wooden catwalks were added in 1962 after the wooden verandas were irreparably damaged by snow. These changes have done little to alter the integrity of the building.

Certain landscape architectural features near the structure contribute to the ambience of the building. These features, constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps under the direction of Park Service landscape architects Merel Sager and Francis Lange, include the trout pools, waterfalls, stone retaining walls and parapet walls, and the campfire circle. Also included is the stone curbing that borders pathways within the boundaries.

The Chateau is operated by Oregon Caves Outfitters providing services critical to the use and enjoyment of the Oregon Caves National Monument, supporting education and respecting the history and diverse natural beauty of this unique environment while giving our guests the best in service and hospitality.

Oregon Caves Outfitters is part of the Illinois Valley Community Development Organization, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, working to improve economic and social conditions in Oregon's rural southwest through programs designed to enhance the standard of living, create jobs and encourage sustainable community development.