

LUMBER BARON INN: POTTER-HIGHLANDS QUEEN ANNE GEM

What do you think it must have been like to live in the Highlands in 1890, when it was known as the “Garden City of the Plains?”

In 1890, John Mouat built this Queen Anne style mansion for his wife Amelia and their five children. Nestled in the historic neighborhood of the Potter Highlands, which was created and settled by the Scottish in 1863, it is now a charming Bed and Breakfast.

Structure

The home boasts elaborate woodwork in cherry, sycamore, oak and walnut supplied by Moaut’s company, and Moaut used it as a means to promote his business to his many guests. A carved stone inset on the west side of the house features thistle and woodworking tools, noting the owner’s profession and Scottish heritage (Bretz, 2005).

The house has a wood-paneled vestibule that leads into a roomy entry hall with a finely carved oak staircase, open at the second level. The main floor consists of a parlor, a library, a dining room, a kitchen and a pantry. The second floor has five guest bedrooms. The house is topped with what was once the city’s largest private ballroom (Bretz).

History

John Mouat was the owner of a Denver/Aspen lumber company and vice president of North Side Building and Loan Company. It is said that he lost his fortune in 1893 and moved out of the house shortly thereafter. In fact, Mouat lived in the house until 1906, when he retired and eventually moved to San Diego. The mansion was subsequently bought by two Denver attorneys. It was initially subdivided in the 1930s and further subdivided into 23 makeshift apartments during World War II.

James Fowler, influential in the founding of Denver’s Urban Gardens and a famous Denver Communist, eventually obtained ownership of the mansion. Fowler believed that such a grand house should not be for just one capitalist but for the masses. In 1991, Maureen and Walter Keller purchased the house shortly after Denver declared the building condemned. After four years of hard work, it was restored to its former grandeur. The mansion received second place in the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Great American Home Award in 1995. It is currently operated as a bed-and-breakfast called the Lumber Baron Inn after its famous original owner (Potter-Highlands Neighborhood History).

Today, the mansion has five rooms, all with private baths and Jacuzzi tubs, and all of the rooms have updated modern showers. Each room has a unique wallpaper design on the ceiling created and installed by Bradbury and Bradbury, world-renowned creators of fine wallpapers. Each room has its own unique design and is decorated with antiques that lend to the genuine mansion experience (History).

Neighborhood

The Highlands is not just one district, but many, and was originally a city in its own right. It was incorporated in 1875. By 1890, Highlands included more than 35 separate subdivisions. The city had high

aspirations of its own, touting clean air high above the smoke and industry of Denver, clean artesian water and, most important, clean morals. Although liquor was not forbidden in Highlands, liquor licenses were so expensive that none were issued until well after Prohibition. When Denver was still a dirty, dusty rambunctious frontier town, devoid of trees and other vegetation, early Highlands settlers were engaged in more civilized pursuits: planting trees and gardens. While Denver was called the Queen City, Highlands was known as the Garden City of the Plains (Potter-Highlands Neighborhood History).

References

Bretz, J. 2005. *Mansions of Denver: The Vintage Years 1870-1938*. Pruett Publishing.

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