

Category 10: Best Building Project (Under \$10million – General Contractor)

Contractor: Saunders Heath Construction

Project Name: The Stanley Carriage House

Located at the base of Rocky Mountain National Park lies the picturesque mountain town of Estes Park, Colorado. Best known as the *Gateway to the Rockies* and home of the famous Stanley Hotel — the Town of Estes Park thrives on summer tourism. The Stanley Hotel captivates many of the tourists visiting from around the world, with a rich history dating back to the early 1900s and its influence in Stephen King’s first hardcover bestselling novel *The Shinning*. Over the decades, the Stanley Hotel campus has been revitalized back to its original wonder offering world-class amenities and unforgettable experiences.

Since 2015, Saunders Heath has played a vital role in the transformation of the Stanley Campus with a variety of renovation and ground up construction projects including updating existing hotel accommodations, adding new lodging with the Aspire Residences, building a new event venue and conference space with the Stanley Pavilion, and most recently rehabilitating The Carriage House. These projects are accredited to John Cullen, president of Grand Heritage Hotel Group and owner of The Stanley Hotel. He acquired the Stanley property back in 1995 with a vision of restoring the property to its original potential of being the destination spot for tourists across the world.

On July 4, 2021, The Stanley Hotel celebrated 112-years with the grand opening of The Carriage House. This date was exceptionally important, as it has been a long-time tradition to celebrate the opening of each new building on the Stanley Campus on the Fourth of July. Originally built in 1909, The Carriage House is the last of the original four structures on the Stanley campus to be renovated. Initially used as storage space to house F.O. Stanley’s steamer vehicles in the early 1900s, it was briefly transformed into a motel in the 1950s but has been left vacant for over a quarter century.

Built without a foundation, construction of The Carriage House began in the fall of 2019. As with most mountain construction, winter conditions provided many challenges for project scheduling and planning of material deliveries. Access to Estes

Park is only available through narrow, winding two-lane highways that are often difficult to travel when winter storms set in over the Rocky Mountains. With few subcontractors willing to travel the difficult highways, having a solid project approach, excellent subcontractor relationships, and a malleable schedule was critical for the success of the project. The project team was also faced with a historic industry-wide materials shortage and delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These delays, or inability to get materials, would often challenge the project flow and sequencing. Increased planning efforts and communication was essential to meet the non-negotiable opening date of July 4, 2021.

Project Execution and Team Approach

Retaining the historical character of The Carriage House was extremely important to owner, John Cullen. Since the building sat vacant for over a quarter century, it had significant deterioration and structural degradation causing all exterior walls of the building unable to be retained. However, the project team was able to preserve the roof structure in its entirety and the exterior walls were reconstructed to match the original in design, color, texture, materials and construction technique.

The removal of the roof structure was a delicate task requiring careful coordination with structural engineers, subcontractors, the architect and owner. The historic wood roof truss system was removed in sections and placed adjacent to the building. Once the roof was securely removed, the project team began demolition of the building structure, and a 14-foot foundation was dug under the original building footprint. Before the roof was replaced on the rebuilt exterior structural walls, it was strengthened to meet current structural code requirements. Sistering of truss material was placed alongside historic members for added structural support in limited locations, and missing truss material was replaced, utilizing similar shape, color, and size of 110-year-old rough sawn wood framing.

Once the core and shell of the building was completed, the team continued with the interior construction for two tenant spaces. Post Chicken and Beer restaurant occupies the first floor and an entertainment venue for illusionist Aiden Sinclair's Underground occupies the basement level.

Construction Innovations

Every effort was made to retain historical accuracy and significance to the original construction by using similar materials and design of the original Carriage House. With little photography and historical information available to the design team during the planning and design phase, it was intentional to honor the known historical features and characteristics of the Stanley Campus. In areas where original materials were unable to be reused due to severe deterioration, products that were no longer in existence, or repair was not feasible, similar construction craftsmanship and materials were used. The largest hurdle was the rehabilitation of the historic roof structure. This required detailed measurements upfront to ensure the new building structure would fit the existing roof. The exterior walls were designed to match the old in structural design, wood color, rough sawn texture, diagonally placed wood plank sheathing material, and construction technique.

Throughout construction, detailed project flow maps were used to allow the project to flow as efficiently as possible. These maps allowed subcontractors to build as efficiently as possible with limited trade stacking. Due to material shortages, this was key to allow the subcontractors to be safe and efficient as they flowed through the project. These maps also tied to the project schedule to ensure all parties were up to date on timing and location of upcoming work. These techniques supported the team in meeting the very tight construction schedule.

Environment/Safety

Although the project did not pursue LEED certification, sustainability practices were implemented throughout the project by using materials that would best capture and retain historical accuracy. Limited amounts of the original sheathing were saved during the removal of exterior walls and reclaimed brown barn wood siding was used to best match original material. The rehabilitation of the roof structure was also of historical significance. Our site safety program was developed to encompass many layers to ensure the safety of everyone on site including the general public who would often be passing near the project site. We believe in the following process as it led us to be more proactive in safety, preventing injuries before they occur.

- **Preconstruction Meetings-** Key areas of work that would create the most hazardous situations were identified before the project started. Preconstruction meetings were scheduled with subcontractors' site supervisory teams to discuss expectations for safety, quality and productivity.
- **Orientations-** As soon as subcontractors mobilized on site, each employee would attend a site-specific orientation detailing the current state of the project and their safety responsibilities.
- **All Hands Safety Meetings-** We held monthly all hands safety meetings to detail upcoming work and the hazards associated with the work.
- **Site Audits-** Our site management team conducted safety audits detailing their findings using BIM 360. BIM 360 compiled the information and sent the affected subcontractors their specific findings. The subcontractors are then required to close the finding in BIM 360. All open findings generate an email to the subcontractors daily until the findings are closed.
- **Stop Work Authority Program-** All employees on our project have the right and responsibility to stop work if they see something that is not safe. We promote this through our orientations, preconstruction meetings, all hands safety meetings and site walks. No employee will be reprimanded if they choose to stop work for a safety issue.

Excellence in Client Service and Contribution to the Community

As the last of the original four structures to be renovated on the Stanley Campus, the rehabilitation of The Carriage House is a perfect example of blending history with modern amenities while simultaneously honoring the past. The rehabilitation of the 112-year old building was not only important to John Cullen, but to the entire community of Estes Park, and to Saunders Heath. The addition of two new businesses, The Post Chicken and Beer and Aiden Sinclair's Underground, both occupying The Carriage House brings added job opportunities, generated sales tax, and added revenue to the local businesses in the area. Furthermore, it created an experience that has never been offered at the Stanley Campus before. The Post patio creates a true Colorado experience where guests can enjoy locally brewed beer and Colorado-style fried chicken, while taking in the vast views of the Rocky Mountains to the east and Lake Estes to the west. The 80-

person capacity venue for Aiden Sinclair's Underground offers a permanent home for the renowned illusionist. His theatrical performances are both family-friendly and caters to those seeking a more paranormal experience while visiting The Stanley Hotel.

Whether you are a local Estes Park resident, a tourist visiting for the first time, or a returning guest, the Stanley Campus and Carriage House offers something for everyone.









