

News Release

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Contact: Rebekah Duffala
Lord, Aeck & Sargent
404-253-1484
rduffala@lasarchitect.com
or
Ann Kohut
Kohut Communications Consulting
770-913-9747
annielk@bellsouth.net

Lord, Aeck & Sargent Completes \$10 Million Restoration of Georgia's Old Governor's Mansion to 1850s Appearance

*"Monumental" Exterior and Interior Restoration of Greek Revival-style
National Historic Landmark
Also Includes Contextual Out-Buildings to Allow for Contemporary Functions*

MILLEDGEVILLE, Ga., March 3, 2005 – The restoration of Georgia's Old Governor's Mansion, a National Historic Landmark designed by noted Georgia architect Charles Cluskey¹ and often praised as one of the country's best examples of Greek Revival-style architecture,² has been completed. The project also included the addition of two contextual out-buildings to allow for the Mansion's contemporary use as a historic house museum and special events facility.

Lord, Aeck & Sargent served as architect, and members of the firm's Atlanta and Ann Arbor, Michigan offices worked on the project, which cost approximately \$10 million and took almost nine years to complete. Project funding came from the Georgia General Assembly and a grant from the Woodruff Foundation.

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History – A house of many uses

The Old Governor's Mansion, on which original construction was finished in 1839, was home for about 30 years to eight Georgia governors. During the Civil War, it was claimed as a "prize" in the "March to the Sea," when Gen. William Sherman made the building his headquarters in 1864. After the war, Georgia's capital city was moved from Milledgeville to Atlanta, and the Mansion was virtually abandoned. In 1889, it was given to what is now Georgia College & State University (GC&SU), the current owner. Since that time, the three-story, 17,000-square-foot Mansion has served a variety of uses, including a women's dormitory, visiting guest house, banquet facility, house museum and home of the GC&SU president.

During the 1960s, the Mansion's interior was renovated and although it was made a National Historic Landmark in 1973, it suffered considerable physical deterioration over succeeding years.

Restoration challenges

"This was a monumental restoration project," said Jim Turner, who is the Mansion's executive director and who did much of the historical research for the project. "Our team was challenged with structural issues, stucco issues and with the overriding goal of preserving the Mansion's historic fabric while at the same time bringing it up to code. The result of their efforts is the stunning restoration of one of the great treasures of the State of Georgia and of the Southeast."

"The Old Governor's Mansion presented us with numerous challenges," said Susan Turner AIA, a Lord, Aeck & Sargent principal and director of the firm's Historic Preservation Studio. "First and foremost, because of the 1960s renovation, which literally gutted the interior,

we had to undertake both an invasive investigation to help us determine the original plan of the three-story structure as well as an extensive conditions assessment of the extant materials.”

Susan Turner noted that when Lord, Aeck & Sargent was hired in 1997 as the Mansion's architect, a determination had to be made about a period to which to restore the house.

Examining an earlier interpretive plan prepared by former White House historian Dr. William Seale and a Historic Structures Report from Surber Barber Choate & Hertlein, the goal became to restore the Mansion's interior to its 1850s appearance. That particular timeframe was chosen as it was a period of the Mansion's social high life and was also the best documented period of the home's early existence. However, the Mansion had been painted gray by the 1850s, and because of its architectural significance, the decision was made to restore the exterior to its original 1839 stucco appearance.

Installing new systems

Since the Mansion is used today for public tours, the team was challenged by the need for an HVAC system as well as a structural and life safety system appropriate for a historic house museum. Both systems needed to have minimal impact on the character of the restored and interpreted spaces.

Following the 1960s renovation, the Mansion had been heated with fan coil units located in the exterior walls. The units caused condensation, resulting in wall moisture problems, and during the restoration they were replaced by a complicated and innovative forced air system. The restoration team designed a solution in which most of the HVAC system was placed in the attic, and small triangular voids found in the walls surrounding the Mansion's rotunda were used for vertical duct runs. From there, ducts were separated into multiple members small enough to run between the floor joists.

The final challenge in installing the new HVAC system was installation of diffusers in such a way that they would be difficult to detect. Linear diffusers were cast into the Mansion's plaster ceilings, and where the original cornices had been lost, replicas were designed with small integral slots to act as diffusers.

In completely replacing the Mansion's electrical system, solutions were devised to reduce the number of devices that show. Examples include the use of period fixtures for the emergency lighting system and the use of self-illuminated exit signs that are hung only when public functions take place.

Restoring the exterior façade

The Mansion's exterior, graced by a raised front porch and four stately columns with Ionic capitals, had been painted many times over, so the restoration team brought in preservation consultant and finishes analyst Sara B. Chase, who identified a few areas that were still original stucco. The analysis showed that the exterior was a lime and sand stucco that took its pinkish cast from Georgia clay. The team formulated a new stucco that matched the original and repaired every surface where the original had deteriorated or been replaced. Afterwards, a new finish coat was applied over the entire exterior to give it a uniform appearance.

A treasure in the attic

Meanwhile, the 1960s renovation also included the removal of the Mansion's original window sashes. Fortunately, however, the sashes were found in the Mansion's attic and were completely restored with care taken to preserve existing components such as mortise and tenon joints and hand whittled dowels found in each joint.

Out-Buildings

Prior to the restoration, the Mansion had been used for banquets, so its original warming kitchen had been turned into a catering kitchen. In the meantime, an original catering kitchen outside the house had been destroyed, and archaeologists were employed to excavate behind the house to identify the kitchen's original location.

In order to return the inside kitchen to its original appearance, Lord, Aeck & Sargent designed a contextual, state-of-the-art banquet kitchen that is attached to the rear of the Mansion by a breezeway. The catering kitchen building also includes public restrooms and a gift shop.

A second new facility is an education building for hosting tour orientations, exhibits and lectures.

The two new buildings comprise 2,300 square feet.

The Design and Construction Team

In addition to Lord, Aeck & Sargent as architect, the design and construction team for the Old Governor's Mansion restoration project includes:

- Architects 4 (Ann Arbor, Mich.), associate architect
- Lord, Aeck & Sargent (Atlanta), interior design
- Andrews, Hammock & Powell (Macon, Ga.), MEP/FP engineer
- SWS Engineering (Southfield, Mich.), associate MEP/FP engineer
- Robert Darvas Associates (Ann Arbor, Mich.), structural engineer
- Sara B. Chase (Lexington, Mass.), finishes consultant
- Dr. William Seale, interiors historian
- Garbutt/Christman, a joint venture partnership (Dublin, Ga.), cost consultant, prime contractor/construction management

About Lord, Aeck & Sargent

Founded in 1942, Lord, Aeck & Sargent is an award-winning architectural firm serving clients in scientific, academic, historic preservation, arts and cultural, and multi-family housing and mixed-use markets. The firm's core values are responsive design, technological expertise and exceptional service. Lord, Aeck & Sargent is headquartered in Atlanta and has branch offices in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Chapel Hill, North Carolina. For more information, visit the firm at www.lordaecksargent.com.

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¹ Charles Cluskey (1808-1871) was an antebellum architect and a prominent designer of Greek Revival-style houses and public buildings in Augusta, Georgia, Milledgeville, Georgia, and Savannah, Georgia. He is well known for his design of the Governor's Mansion in Milledgeville and the original Medical College of Georgia (1835) in Augusta.

² According to "Greek Revival Architecture in America" by Talbot Hamlin (Dover Publications: New York, 1944), Georgia's Old Governor's Mansion is "a splendid example of a conventional type more unusual elsewhere in the country..."

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