

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Ken Higa
Lord, Aeck & Sargent
404-253-6732
khiga@lasarchitect.com
or
Ann Kohut
Kohut Communications Consulting
770-913-9747
annielk@bellsouth.net

Swan House Receives Excellence in Restoration Award From the Georgia Trust
Lord, Aeck & Sargent Was Preservation Architect
In \$5.45 Million Restoration of 1928 Home Turned Historic House Museum

ATLANTA, April 19, 2004 – Swan House, a Neoclassical style home-turned-historic house museum, received an award last week for Excellence in Restoration from The Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation. Lord, Aeck & Sargent, an Atlanta-based architectural firm, served as preservation architect for a six-year, \$5.45 million project to restore the house to its historic 1928 appearance.

Swan House, which has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1977, was designed by well known Atlanta architect Philip Trammell Shutze and is now owned by the Atlanta History Center. Located on Center's 33-acre campus, the home received its name for the swan motif found throughout the interior. Shutze designed the home for Mr. and Mrs. Edward Hamilton Inman, heirs to a cotton-merchandising fortune, and the home's architecture, which adapted Italian and English classical styles to accommodate 20th-century living, is considered his finest residential work.

- more -

The Georgia Trust's Excellence in Restoration Award category is given for projects that represent exemplary restoration of historic structures. According to The Georgia Trust, which is the country's largest statewide, nonprofit preservation organization, an accurate restoration project depicts the form, features and character of a historic building as it appeared at a particular period of time. It also requires sensitive upgrading of mechanical systems and other code-required work to make the building functional.

"The Atlanta History Center had very specific requirements for the restoration of Swan House – and all of its architectural details – to return the home to its original 1928 appearance," said Jim Bruns, Atlanta History Center executive director. "We needed expertise and guidance from a firm with a proven track record in historic preservation and historic interiors consulting, and we needed preservation architects who embraced our 'hands-on' approach as construction managers for the project. Lord, Aeck & Sargent fit all of our needs perfectly, and we applaud them for the results of their work."

The Atlanta History Center hired Lord, Aeck & Sargent in 1998 to coordinate the work of a project preservation team. Work began with the restoration of an outdoor fountain and garden wall, then continued with a plan to integrate mechanical, electrical, plumbing, fire protection/alarm and security systems into the house. Work was completed with the restoration of the home's interior finishes to their original state. During the restoration, Swan House public tours continued, and visitors were able to learn about and share in the excitement surrounding the restoration.

Fountain and Garden Wall Restoration

The Swan House exterior's west façade is graced by a large concrete fountain consisting of cascading pools that overlap one another, each pool a shell-shaped bowl. Over

the years, water from the fountain eroded the surface of the concrete bowl edges and exposed the steel reinforcing, which deteriorated and caused the bowls to begin crumbling and become structurally unsound. During the 1970s, pipe columns were inserted to hold up the bowls, but they detracted from the fountain's appearance. Lord, Aeck & Sargent's design repaired the original steel reinforcing, restored the concrete bowls, and removed the pipe columns.

In addition, the firm provided the design for the restoration, repair and cleaning of the garden wall, which is made of stucco on stone masonry.

MEPFP System Integration

Following restoration of the fountain and garden wall, attention was turned to the integration of mechanical, electrical, plumbing and fire protection and alarm (MEPFP) systems.

"We were fortunate in that Swan House, unlike many early 20th century homes, was built with a mechanical system, so we were able to use duct runs and other existing locations for the new system with no significant modifications to the architecture of the house," said Susan Turner, AIA, director of Lord, Aeck & Sargent's Historic Preservation Studio. "The system that was installed achieves the temperature and humidity standards of a museum-quality environment and will be kind to the collection of furniture, paintings and other objets d'art."

Turner said that many other decisions – all placing the highest priority on protection of the house museum and its collection – were made with regard to the MEPFP systems and related adaptations. Among them:

- To prevent condensation – which would harm the collection – from forming on the windows as a result of the temperature and humidity settings, the firm chose to add storm windows on the inside of the windows. "You really have to look hard to notice them," Turner noted.

- A decision was made to deactivate the original plumbing system throughout most of Swan House as a precaution against a possible flood or other water damage. Public restrooms were placed on the terrace level, where any water damage cannot harm the collection.
- An entirely new electrical system was installed. The new system features emergency lighting, where none was available before.
- A fully sprinkled fire protection system was installed, and sprinkler heads are concealed to reduce their visual impact on the interpretive spaces throughout the house museum.
- An air sampling/smoke detection system was installed. Detectors, consisting of small tubes embedded in the ceiling, periodically take samples of air, which are sent to the equipment room for analysis. If smoke is detected, the fire alarm system is activated.

Restoration of the Interiors

Early on in the interior restoration process, Lord, Aeck & Sargent performed a detailed conditions assessment of every room within Swan House. From that, Turner said, "We developed the drawings and specifications designed to show the contractor exactly what needed to be done to restore and repair every finish in the house."

This included, among other things, restoration of:

- the fully wood-paneled library and interior mahogany doors throughout the house, using a rubbing process similar to French polishing to return the wood to a deep, rich shine;
- elaborate plasterwork, which was in some areas significantly deteriorated due to water damage;
- the breakfast porch, by removing glazing that had been added in the 1970s, screening it and adding awnings to return it to its original state; and

- paint, reverting the paint colors to their historic appearances based on an analysis by nationally renowned preservation consultant and finishes analyst Sara B. Chase.

“One of the most important and surprising things we learned while researching some of Philip Trammell Shutze’s own writings was that he collaborated closely with Mrs. Inman and her interior designer, whose name was Ruby Ross Wood, on the interior design and decoration at Swan House,” Turner said. “We found that Shutze excluded the finishes from his scope of work in key rooms. This possibly allowed Mrs. Wood, who used color as a design tool to create backgrounds for furniture and art, to determine the colors. In keeping with our research findings, Sara Chase’s historic paint analysis revealed some paint colors that were much more characteristic of Mrs. Wood’s method of contrasting light and dark colors than of Shutze’s style.”

The Swan House Preservation Team

- Atlanta History Center, Atlanta – owner and general contractor
- Lord, Aeck & Sargent, Atlanta – preservation architect
- Sara B. Chase, Lexington, Mass. – finishes analyst
- Creative Engineering Design, Atlanta – mechanical, plumbing and fire protection engineer
- Jeffers Engineering Associates, Norcross, Georgia – electrical engineer
- Heery International, Atlanta – structural engineer
- Kelly Lundstrom George Inc., Atlanta – lighting designer

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 markets. The firm’s core values are responsive design, technological expertise and exceptional service. Lord, Aeck & Sargent is headquartered in Atlanta and has offices in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Chapel Hill, North Carolina. For more information, visit the firm at www.lordaecksargent.com.

About the Atlanta History Center

Founded in 1926 as the Atlanta Historical Society, the Atlanta History Center includes four signature exhibitions and two changing exhibition galleries in the Atlanta History Museum, two historic homes, the James G. Kenan Research Center, the Grand Overlook event space and 33 acres of gardens. The organization's mission is to inspire people to connect to the past so they may better understand the present and prepare for the future. For more information, visit the Atlanta History Center's web site at www.AtlantaHistoryCenter.com.

About The Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation

The Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation, founded in 1973, is the country's largest statewide, nonprofit preservation organization, with more than 8,000 members. For more than 20 years the Trust has recognized preservation projects and individuals in the state who have made significant contributions to the field of historic preservation. Its awards are presented on the basis of the contributions of a person or project to the community and/or state and on compliance to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The Georgia Trust is a recipient of the Trustees Award for Organizational Excellence from the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

###