

Narrator: When the Grove Park Inn officially opened its door in the summer of 1913, Secretary of State, William Jennings Bryan, declared that it had been built for the ages.

The Inn was dedicated to providing its guests with relaxing respite from the outside world, which remains our current philosophy.

Over 100 years later, we still celebrate and honor the lives and legacies that have brought us to where we are today.

Welcome to the Omni Grove Park Inn.

Narrator: Born in 1850, Edwin Wiley Grove became a pharmaceutical magnate in his early twenties, when he opened the Grove's Pharmacy in Paris, Tennessee.

It was there that he developed and patented a way to suspend quinine in a liquid form as an effort to battle malaria, which was very prevalent in the South at the time.

Quinine was known to help treat and suppress malarial symptoms, such as chills and fever, as well as destroy the malarial parasite.

Due to its unpleasant and bitter taste, quinine was known as "the cure that kills you".

Grove developed the infamous Grove's Tasteless Chill Tonic in order for the public to guard against this widespread disease. The Chill Tonic was advertised as tasteless, yet was far from it.

Grove cut the taste of quinine with iron, sugar and lemon flavoring. After the success of Grove's Tasteless Chill Tonic, E.W. Grove became a self-made millionaire by the time he had reached his forties.

By the end of the 1890s, more bottles of Grove's Tasteless Chill Tonic were sold than Coca Cola and the product became a household name for decades.

The slogan "No cure, no pay" amounted to a money-back guarantee as well as trust instilled in Grove and his products.

Other products sold by the Paris Medicine Company included Paso Ointment for piles, Dr. Porter's Antiseptic Healing Oil and Grove's Laxative Bromo Quinine, the world's first successful cold tablet.

It was E.W. Grove's quality products and honest business practices that led him to a fortune that he could only have dreamed of as a young boy. Through the expansion of his business in the 1890s, Grove was eventually led to the mountains of western North Carolina to seek relief from bronchitis and chronic hiccups.

Upon discovering Asheville, E.W. Grove came to the realization that the area was the perfect location for what would become deemed the finest resort hotel in the world.

Frederick Loring Seely was born in 1871 and worked as a chemist, philanthropist, inventor and newspaper man before assisting his father-in-law, E.W. Grove, with the task of designing and constructing the Grove Park Inn.

In 1912 and 1913 he began working in the pharmaceutical industry as an office assistant when he was just 13 years old. His interest in medicine led him to pharmacy school and eventually his introduction to E.W. Grove.

Seely began working directly with Grove and after helping to perfect several of E.W. Grove's medicine formulas; Grove was so impressed with Seely that he hired him to oversee operations of a small laboratory in Asheville, North Carolina.

After earning Grove's approval, Fred Seely married Grove's daughter Evelyn and continued to further his education and professional pursuits.

Seely founded the Atlanta, Georgia newspaper and worked for several years as a publisher, until E.W. Grove sought after Seely's help to visualize and develop the plans for a luxury resort hotel within the mountains of Western North Carolina. Although he was not an architect, Fred Seely drafted his idea for the Grove Park Inn utilizing native granite stones excavated from the mountains, on which the hotel would eventually stand.

Fred Seely assisted Grove in overseeing the construction of the inn and remained the general manager until 1928.

Narrator: With its steel and concrete frame, the structure of historic main inn is unlike any other. Italian stonemasons fit the boulders into place like pieces of a puzzle. Along with the stonemasons, hundreds of local laborers worked on the property and each was paid one dollar per day for their services.

Workmen were instructed that every visible stone should reveal its most timeworn face. The lobby is known as the Great Hall and for good reason. Measuring 120 feet across, the Hall features 24 foot ceilings and two gigantic, 14 foot stone fireplaces.

These massive fireplaces are famous for their size and uniqueness. The andirons, weighing 500 pounds each, were designed and built in Asheville specifically for these huge hearths.

In the winter, roaring fires now add warmth and atmosphere to the Great Hall. Originally these great fires served as the main heating source for the main Inn and each fireplace burned several nine-foot logs.

The large boulders that make up the fireplaces are all native granite and some weigh up to three to five tons each. Another unique feature of our fireplaces are the original working Otis elevators, concealed within the rocks alongside the chimney shaft.

Our elevators are one of a kind and have been featured in Ripley's Believe or Not for their unique design and engineering, though that was certainly not the original intent of putting them there.

The elevators were actually built inside of the fireplace to cover up the immense noise of the machinery.

When Grove and Seely first opened their hotel, they wanted it to be a destination where guests could come and not be disturbed by an unnecessary noise or distraction.

To aid with the noise reduction, guests in the early years were discouraged from bringing small children under ten years old. It was requested that guests refrain from slamming their doors and throwing their shoes on the floor. They were even asked not to run the water past 10:00 p.m. as to not disturb their neighbors. If discussion in the Great Hall grew too animated, they were handed a small card urging them to simply "Quiet Down".

The roof of the Grove Park Inn is unlike any other, featuring a five and a half inch thick solid slab of reinforced concrete, poured over an elaborate mesh-like web of twisted steel, it is absolutely weatherproof.

Covering the cement slabs are the iconic red clay tiles that most easily distinguish our hotel.

The effect of the whole roof was to be thatch-like in appearance and Grove and Seely chose the red clay tiles because of their natural look when viewed from across the valley.

Grove's vision became a reality on July 12, 1913, when his grand hotel opened its doors for the first time to promote relaxation and overall wellness for generations to come.

Narrator: The Omni Grove Park Inn has the largest public collection of original Arts and Crafts style furniture. More commonly known as Mission style, all of the original furniture and light fixtures for the hotel were designed by the Roycroft Artisan Community from East Aurora, New York.

Seely had visited the Roycroft Inn and appreciated the simple lines and quality of the Roycroft furnishings. He contacted the Roycroft Artisan Community and offered the job of furnishing the Grove Park Inn to the Roycrofters.

Over 600 hammered copper lighting fixtures were crafted in the Roycrofters' workshops, along with four large corner servers, two sideboards, a number of chairs and tables, as well as other accessories.

The workshops also constructed more than 400 oak chairs used at the Grove Park Inn's opening banquet, many of which are still on display today throughout the hallways of the inn.

The eight foot tall Roycroft grandfather clock, which proudly still stands just inside the front doors of our main entrance, has set the stage for every guest's arrival for over 100 years. This clock has a hammered copper face and bears the orb and cross insignia of the Roycrofters on the left side.

A similar, yet smaller, case clock, measuring six feet tall, is located across from the memorabilia exhibit in the entrance of the Vanderbilt wing. This smaller version was made specifically for Fred Seely's office.

Thanks to Seely's interest in edifying his guests and employees, you will also discover quotes and other words of wisdom inscribed on the rocks throughout the Great Hall, similar to the motivational saying that Elbert Hubbard and the Roycrofters were well-known for using throughout their work.

The inn's dedication to the Arts and Crafts movement remains intact today. Our public spaces still celebrate the Arts and Crafts style, with many of the original furnishings present in our Great Hall, along with newer pieces that have been handcrafted specifically for the space by local artists.

Narrator: The Omni Grove Park Inn has hosted some of the most influential and prominent figures in American and world history since 1913. Among that list are numerous actors, athletes, musicians, comedians, authors and politicians. Perhaps one of the most notorious guests is American author, F.Scott Fitzgerald.

Fitzgerald resided at the inn for two summers, in 1935 and 1936. He came for a bit of relaxation and respite and to revive his career. In 1936, he also chose to be at the inn to be closer to his wife, Zelda, who had been institutionalized at nearby Highland Hospital.

Fitzgerald was just one of many American luminaries that have stayed here at the inn.

Other notable guests include Harry Houdini, Will Rogers, Helen Keller, Thomas Edison, Eleanor Roosevelt, Henry Ford and ten different U.S. Presidents.

Narrator: It's hard to believe today that there was a time soon after World War II when the only thing that kept the inn standing was the prohibitive cost of tearing it down.

Fortunately, in 1955, the hotel caught the eye of Dallas businessman, Charles Sammons. Under the stewardship of Sammons and his wife, Elaine, the inn was fully restored. And in 1973, it was named to the National Register of Historic Places.

With the restoration came a new era of hospitality, as the resort was perfected for a modern audience. The contemporary wings of the hotel were added and beginning in 1998, a period of intensive renovation and expansion occurred, culminating in the creation of the resort's 50 million dollar spa.

In 2012, the hotel underwent an extensive 25 million dollar renovation, which included updating and refreshing many of our guestrooms and public areas of the hotel, as well as the addition of a brand-new dining outlet, Edison Craft Ales and Kitchen, named for inventor Thomas Edison, another one of the hotel's famous guests.

In July of 2013, Omni Hotels and Resorts acquired the Grove Park Inn from KSL Resorts as a part of a multi-property deal, which included the Omni La Costa Resort in Carlsbad, California and the historical Omni Homestead Resort in Hot Springs, Virginia.

It all began with an elixir. And while the tonic is largely forgotten today, it allowed Grove to forge a more lasting legacy, a place of rest, relaxation and renewal, in the mountains of Asheville, North Carolina.

From its striking n native granite exterior, to the chandeliers in the Great Hall, our rich history is built into every inch of this resort.

Grove's vision of a place of respite continues to be fine-tuned for a modern audience, while stay paying homage to our history and heritage.

For over 100 years, the Omni Grove Park Inn has been one of America's most beloved destinations, as well as a place designed and dedicated to providing its guests with gracious Southern hospitality, comfort and genuine delight.