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HISTORIC LITTLETON INC.

Newsletter
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A brief history of Historic Littleton Inc.

In 1989 as the city of Littleton prepared to celebrate its centennial, a group of residents gathered at the Littleton Leadership Retreat to talk about the community - past and future. Michael Massey suggested the formation of a Second Century fund to help restore and preserve Littleton's historic buildings for a second 100 years.

The Second Century Fund, a nonprofit grass roots organization was formed with a board of directors consisting of local business people who felt that the downtown gave the city its unique identity and character, and was an asset for the entire community.

With assistance from the city and the Littleton Historical Museum and funding from the Colorado Historical Society, the SCF put together a matching grant program for historic preservation, used in restoration of a number of downtown buildings.

For several years, the board has discussed whether it was time to change to a membership organization to broaden community involvement in preservation issues and recognition of the importance of learning about the city's heritage. It will observe National Historic Preservation Month each May, produce a newsletter and organize other programming for members.

Charter Member Recognition

Sunday November 12, 2000
4 - 6 p.m.

Geneva Lodge
2305 West Berry
Chris and Renee Fisher, son and daughter of Dave and Fredda Fisher, will be at the Historic Littleton, Inc. Charter member reception on November 12 to discuss their renovation work and showoff the family firm's headquarters.

Geneva Lodge has seen many uses in its 75 years.

Back in the 1920s the building was part of a poultry farm known as Romoco, the home of Mr. and Mrs. Stuart L. Sweet. The Romoco Poultry Farm included 15

acres of grounds with trees and lakes and 2,000 laying hens. In 1927 the Sweets sold the farm to the International Geneva Association, a fraternal organization for men in the hotel and restaurant business.

The Chicken farm became a convalescent home for aged and incapacitated hotel and restaurant workers. As the Littleton Independent reported on January 14, 1927, "This Home will bring to Colorado, and to Littleton particularly, hotel and restaurant men from all parts of America and in fact from all over the world. These Greeters will come here to rest...and to recuperate from their strenuous duties of serving the public."

At that time the dry, sunny climate of Colorado was nationally-prescribed cure for tuberculosis. Many of Denver's old mansions and farmhouses became boardinghouses for tuberculars and asthmatics.

Geneva Lodge was the only

home for retired restaurant workers in the United States, although the International Geneva Association operated similar homes in Europe, South America, Australia and the Orient.

In 1941 Geneva Home was enlarged to allow 20 guests. A new wing with a solarium was added. The retired hoteliers raised vegetables, tended to a flock of chickens and ducks, and fished and rowed on the lakes.

By 1973 the Geneva International Home was down to just three patients. The Geneva Association decided to close the facility and put the last three men in nursing homes.

The City of Littleton bought the 14.5 acre Geneva property in 1975 for \$675,000 as a site for a new city hall. Littleton Mayor Vaughn Gardinier presided over a ceremony lowering the Geneva flag and raising the banner of Littleton at the lodge.

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The Geneva building became the headquarters for several groups, including the Youth Employment Service and the Arapahoe County League of Women Voters. Later the city used the building as office space and for storing records.

But by 1995 Geneva Lodge had fallen into disrepair, with peeling paint and boarded-up windows. Raccoons and birds were the only residents. The City of Littleton faced the decision of what to do with the building.

Members of the Second Century Fund (now Historic Littleton, Inc.) asked the city council to save the building. Gail Hermsen (Keeley), who did the land use study for the Southwest corridor light rail project, testified that the lodge qualified for national register status. After a heated debate, the Littleton City Council voted to stabilize the structure and mothball it, until a use could be found.

In 1997 David Fisher, a Littleton architect and owner of Fisher Associates, came up with a plan to renovate the building. Fisher's renovation costs of nearly \$500,000 would be applied to lease credits from the City of Littleton. The city Council approved the deal and Fisher began the job of restoring the Craftsman style building. Fisher Associates moved into Geneva Lodge in 1998. The Lodge was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1999.

Sidebar on Geneva Lodge

- ▶ Renovating Geneva Lodge meant replacing all the mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems and doing "a lot of patching," according

to Chris Fisher, one of the architects with Fisher Associates.

- ▶ The once-derelict Geneva Lodge is now a beautiful example of Craftsman style architecture and décor. Besides replacing all the infrastructure of Geneva Lodge, the Fishers had to remove walls, redo wood floors, fix holes and repaint. "We really wanted to keep the Décor to the trends of the time," Renee said. They found a supplier for wallpaper of the Arts and Crafts era and used matching paint colors. While some of the walls in the 1940s addition were removed, the Fishers kept the front section, dating back to the 1920 Romoco Poultry Farm, historically correct.
- ▶ The original curving stairwell and woodwork were restored with the red shellac of the era. Light fixtures, hardware and furnishing are in the Arts and Crafts style.
- ▶ The Fishers relied upon the memories of Betty Croft, who lived at Geneva Lodge from age five with her mother Elizabeth Rees, matron of the home. She showed them a hole in the floor where a butlers' button was. Her mother would press it to summon the kitchen help.
- ▶ "I just love this building," Renee said. "It's such a unique environment." Fisher added that it's very easy to recruit people to work for the firm. "They just love the space and love where we are located."

Calendar

Historic Littleton is planning events for the coming year. Listed are some of the events that have been planned or are being considered.

2000

November 12 Tour of Geneva Lodge for Charter Members

2001

May National Historic Preservation Month
 May 16 Annual Renewal dinner at Hudson Gardens
 May 20 Museum Day

In the works:

Spring The trial of Alferd Packer
 Summer Cocktail party at the Cherokee Ranch
 Summer/Fall Tour of Historic Lakeside Amusement Park

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 Join Historic Littleton, Inc.

- Charter Member in 2000 - \$50.00 Includes invitation to special membership event or
- Annual Family Membership - \$25.00

Name _____
 Address _____
 City, Zip _____
 Email _____
 Phone _____

Please send with your check to Historic Littleton, Inc. P. O. Box 1004 Littleton, CO 80160-1004

- I would like to volunteer to help with HLI's programs and/or events.