



# Two CPAs + One Castle = A Historic Renovation

BY NATALIE ROONEY

*Steve and April Carver are a rare find – for multiple reasons. First, they’re both CPAs. Second, they own a castle. Now, thanks to their restoration efforts, they have earned a place in history alongside some of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century’s most famous names.*



Photos courtesy of Mountain Home Photography

**A**fter graduating from Montrose High School, Steve Carver attended the University of Denver. Valedictorian April Thomas went off to Colorado State University in Fort Collins. As Steve puts it, “We were classmates but dated others.” They reconnected after their sophomore year in college and married after junior year. After college graduation, they went to work for Dalby, Wendland & Co. P.C. in Glenwood Springs. “We went from the Western Slope to the Eastern Slope apart and came back to the Western Slope together,” says Steve.

Steve remained at Dalby Wendland for 38 years. April eventually moved on to become controller at Valley View Hospital.

In 1991, the Carvers, along with a few partners, purchased the Hotel Denver in Glenwood Springs. Rooms were renting for \$29.95 a night at the time. “We thought the hotel was a bargain,” Steve says. “We paid exactly what it was worth.”

Built in 1915, the interior of the hotel wasn’t exactly in keeping with its exterior design – a lot of unattractive Formica needed to be replaced. April knew that to compete with the newer hotel chains coming to Glenwood, the Hotel Denver had to offer something different. She began methodically renovating, replacing all of that laminate with antiques the Carvers bought at auctions. Over 27 years, the Carvers remodeled every room in the hotel, trying to mix the old with the new. “It wasn’t necessarily a historic renovation, but it became a nice boutique hotel,” Steve says.

In 1996, they opened the Glenwood Canyon Brew Pub in the Hotel Denver with Jim and Bill Carver (no relation). In 2015, they held a 100-year celebration for the hotel. Eventually they bought out their partners to become sole owners.

April and Steve didn’t know it at the time, but as they honed their hotelier skills at the Hotel Denver, they were preparing for a much larger project.

### THE RUBY OF THE ROCKIES

Redstone, Colorado, known as the Ruby of the Rockies, is a small Pitkin County community located on the Crystal River at the base of McClure Pass. With a 2010 population of just 130, the village is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district. This little hamlet began as a coal camp and became the unlikely choice for 19th century industrialist John Cleveland Osgood, purportedly the sixth wealthiest man in the



Photo courtesy of JMGant Photography

world at the turn of the 20th century, to build his coal empire.

Osgood’s investment in the area eventually led to the construction of the Crystal River Railroad and Redstone’s now-historic dwellings which included cottages for the coal miners and the historic Redstone Inn.

The crown jewel of Redstone was the 42-room Tudor-style mansion Osgood built for his second of three wives. He named it Cleveholm Manor – known as Redstone Castle today.

Construction began in 1897 and was completed in 1902. No expense was spared. The castle had soaring balloon ceilings, wood paneling designed by Gustav Stickely, and cast brass globe lights created by Louis Tiffany. Dyed leather and silk adorned the walls, and Italian marble and tile surrounded each of the 14 fireplaces.

Osgood loved to show off his home to his friends. Frequent visitors included John D. Rockefeller, J. Pierpont Morgan, and Teddy Roosevelt. Despite the who’s who guests who spent their time at Redstone Castle, Osgood eventually lost control of the mines and coke

ovens which gradually shut down. He left the area in 1911 and did not return until 1924. Osgood died at Redstone in 1926.

In 1971, Redstone Castle was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

### THE KEYS TO THE CASTLE

Over the years, Steve, April, and their three daughters passed by Redstone and the castle as they drove to their cabin located on the other side of McClure Pass. As hoteliers and historians, the place intrigued them. “We’d think, “That’s a unique place but obviously out of our reach,” Steve recalls.

The Carvers had seen the castle bought and sold multiple times. The castle sold for \$6 million. Then it sold for \$4 million. Each time, new owners tried to make a go of different business models – a B&B, a wedding facility. Sewer issues and zoning restrictions created ongoing problems for anyone who owned the property.

It even was caught up in a skirmish involving a Greeley man running a Ponzi scheme, the IRS, and the SEC. A local attorney and historian stepped in and sued the federal

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 18**

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

government to protect the property. The result was a conservation easement on both exterior and interior portions of the castle and grounds. "It's unique to have a conservation easement on the inside of a property," Steve explains.

In June 2016, Steve told the firm he planned to retire in 2018. The timing was fortuitous, because not too many months later, the Carvers received a postcard announcing that Redstone Castle was to be sold at auction for a minimum bid of \$2 million.

Suddenly, the castle wasn't so far out of reach. They researched, discussed, and finally decided on a number. If they could get to that number, they would go for it.

On Oct. 7, 2016, Redstone Castle was auctioned. The Carvers beat out two other bidders, purchasing the property for \$2.2 million and becoming the 11th owners in Redstone Castle's 114-year history.

Now the work really began.

### FROM VISION TO REALITY

The Carvers called their architect, Nan Anderson. "We told her what we'd done," Steve laughs. Over dinner, they discussed concepts, drawing their ideas out on a napkin. "We ended up doing ninety-five percent of that," he says.

April had a vision: a boutique hotel offering an elegant experience, without losing the authenticity of the structure. Because of the interior conservation easement, they couldn't change any of the architectural features. "But why would we want to?" April points out. "The architecture and the structure are unique."

Steve says that structurally, the castle was in phenomenal shape. It had been built by the best craftsmen of the time. To make sure the original features were restored to their former glory, the Carvers brought in restoration experts who discovered, among other things, that what was thought to be a gold leaf ceiling in the library was actually aluminum leaf – more valuable than gold in Osgood's time.

When the renovation began, the castle had three working bathrooms. Seventeen were created by tucking them into repurposed spaces or by renovating existing bathrooms.

The intricate frescoes, the glazed ceiling in the library, the velvet walls in the dining

room, the leather walls in the library, and the hand-rubbed Honduran wood – the Carvers were committed to giving all of it new life. This was no small feat as some rooms had suffered water damage over the decades.

They re-established the original main receiving area. They found an original door in the barn, and local craftsmen worked to match the original trim. The restoration experts recast and reglazed the ceilings. Leather was restretched. Wallpaper was cleaned,

## "It took all of our years of experience to get this done."

repaired, and re-stenciled to match the original.

Ultimately, they touched every wall, ceiling, and floor in the interior. No walls were moved, successfully preserving the same unique arches and structures Osgood enjoyed.

The Carvers used cameras to examine the castle's plumbing and found it in nearly perfect shape. Clay pipes 10 feet underground were accessible by brick-lined manholes. "It was exceptionally well done," Steve says.

The sanitary sewer system, which had been the undoing of previous owners, was a challenge that spanned two years (and 20 meetings with various officials) from permits to completion. The solution was to run sewer pipe three-quarters of a mile from Redstone, uphill to the castle.

This, Steve says, is where being CPAs was invaluable. "We were able to work through all of the issues and to understand things like the conservation easement, what land use codes meant, and dealing with officials. I've

said it took all of our years of experience to get this done. Thank God we didn't do this at age 35!"

Steve credits the success of the renovation to April's knack for details and decorating. "She always pays attention to the way things are, talking to the architects. You see it in everything at the Hotel Denver and the brew pub." He also admits things go better "when I stay out of decorating decisions."

### THE BIG REVEAL

In November 2018, Redstone Castle opened for business with 11 luxury suites. Each has a separate bedroom, bathroom, and sitting room and is approximately 500 square feet. As of March, 2019, 120 paying guests have spent the night at the castle. Many more nights are already on the books. The Carvers gave more than 1,000 tours in the first two and a half months.

This summer, the castle will host picnics, historical society fundraisers, and musical revues. Wedding inquiries are rolling in, as well. "We're in the process of raising awareness," Steve says.

The Carvers' niece and nephew, Jennifer and Pete, live on site, manage the day-to-day operations, and take care of guests. They're clearly doing something right because they have a perfect 5 out of 5 rating on TripAdvisor. April and Steve still live in No Name, where they have had a home for the past 17 years.

"From wildlife biologists to noise studies, from historic restoration to structural engineers, from water guys to sewer construction, we've met a ton of different people and learned a lot of different ways of doing things," Steve reflects. "It's a complicated business, and we're fortunate to have our training and experience as CPAs." He talks about the Colorado and federal historic tax credit issues which he hadn't dealt with much during his career. "I met with experts to help me understand, and I learned about it all. It was a process."

The wisdom which came from the experience, according to Steve: "You don't grow old if you're continuing to learn." ▲

If you'd like to learn more about the history of Redstone Castle, visit [theredstonecastle.com](http://theredstonecastle.com).