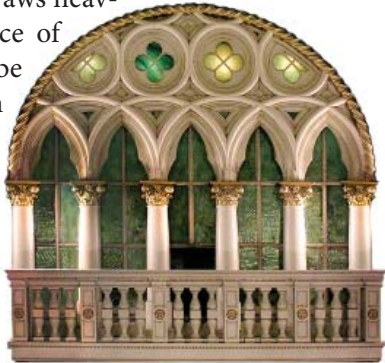


The Hall of the Doges

BEFORE the hotel was conceived, Louis Davenport commissioned Kirtland Cutter to design a ballroom for his famous restaurant that would “eclipse in luxury and splendor anything of its kind west of the Mississippi.” The Venetian Gothic style of the architecture draws heavily upon the Palace of the Doges, as can be seen especially in the upper story arches. The spandrels between them are adorned by allegorical figures representing Music, Dance, Wine, and Good Cheer. The artist responsible for them and the ceiling painting with female figures and cherubs in the clouds remains unidentified.



As the years of decline took their toll, the open arches were closed in and covered with red-flocked wallpaper, the original colors were painted over, and the ceiling was abraded by scrubbing. The dilemma for the Hall of the Doges was that the supporting building was too dilapidated to preserve. The solution came with the idea to “put it in a box.” The lower half was disassembled and the pieces labeled, while the upper portion was crated up and lifted out with two cranes, to be safely stored across the street until its new home was built.

Grand Pennington Ballroom

DURING its golden age, the Davenport contained a world of worlds beyond those already described, including the Gothic Room, the Mandarin Room, the Pergola Promenade, and the former Peacock Room. In their place stands the Grand Pennington Ballroom. Named after Louis Davenport’s

sister-in-law, Maude Pennington, whose boarding house adjoined Davenport’s Restaurant, the hotel’s largest ballroom is an entirely new construction. All of its decorative plasterwork was specially designed by skilled craftsman Petr Shiva who carved all the models in wood and cast them in plaster.



The Pompeiian Barber Shop

LOCATED in the Davenport’s basement in what is now the Davenport Spa, the original barber shop was decorated in a Pompeiian style, with murals painted by Einar Petersen. By the time the hotel closed in 1985, his designs had been completely painted white, perhaps to avoid having to repair water damage in one corner that caused some parts of the murals to flake. Because the original paint was oil and the white was latex, that overpaint could be removed to recover Petersen’s artistry.



© 2012 by Melville Holmes and Kathryn Brogdon. All rights reserved.
Published by Casa Guidi Visions.
Visit online: melvilleholmes.com

Art & Ornament in the DAVENPORT HOTEL



THE builders of the Davenport Hotel saw Spokane as a great commercial hub and a successor to the powerful trading empires of history. The city needed a grand and elegant guest house to worthily represent the people and prosperity of the vast Inland Empire. The art and ornament of that great hotel would express the ideals of Western civilization through symbols of commerce and trade, travel and adventure, social enterprise, and — most importantly — hospitality.

Above the ever-burning lobby fireplace, Einar Petersen’s oil painting of the three ships of Columbus signifies the transmission of Old World culture into the New. The varied historical styles of the public rooms mirror this idea. Petersen’s color schemes and architect Kirtland Cutter’s designs were to evoke reflections of Spain, England, Venice, France, and ancient Pompeii.

After successive ownerships, the hotel went into decline and its artistic splendor was marred by damage and inept repairs. Its original vibrancy was revived during the renovation of 2000-2002.



The Davenport Lobby

THE LOBBY evokes the enclosed courtyard of a convivial Spanish estate, its opalescent skylights suggesting the open sky. Reliefs of vines and flowers dance upon ancient “oak” beams of polychromed plaster amidst richly symbolic figures. The helmet and scimitar, for example, symbolize strength and protection, the portrait roundels suggest venerable ancestry, and the heraldic emblems represent celebrated cities and kingdoms. A number of motifs can be traced directly to 16th-century Spanish origins. The old reds, blues, and antique gold derive from a Moorish coloring



system said to rely heavily on the primary colors. The beams had severely darkened over time from smoke and soot, but have been carefully cleaned and restored.

The fireplace painting by Einar Petersen, the Davenport’s original artist-in-residence and interior decorator, was so darkened that its subject was hard to make out. It was cleaned in 2001 by his contemporary counterpart, Melville Holmes, who also gilded its frame in 22-kt. gold.



The Isabella Room

ORIGINALLY the hotel’s formal dining room, the graceful and romantic Isabella Room was named for Queen Isabella of Spain, who financed Columbus’s voyages. Early Davenport literature suggests a Spanish Renaissance influence in the room’s ornamentation, but it is difficult to identify anything Spanish about it.

As with many parts of the hotel, the original colors had been painted over, in this case in a yellow cream with metallic gold paint on the bas-relief ornaments, obscuring the detail. Unable to recover the original coloring, Holmes developed glazing techniques to reveal the charming figures of a boy, rooster, rabbit, fox, turtle, and frog among the entwined vines of the frieze.

Though original to the hotel, the portrait on the east wall is by an unknown artist working in 18th-century style and technique and cannot be the Spanish queen. It had darkened with age and crude retouchings. Now restored, it has been suggested that the artist may have intended to depict the goddess Flora holding an idealized, symbolic garden tool.



Marie Antoinette Ballroom

AYEAR after opening, the Marie Antoinette Ballroom was called “a dream of dignified simplicity, chaste elegance, and delicate beauty.”

By 2000, Petersen’s refined color scheme had been lost. The room was all white with salmon-red

ceilings, and the ornamentation of the hotel’s French Neo-classical ballroom was thickly clogged with many coats of paint.



To avoid stripping the entire room, Holmes adapted glazing techniques to reveal details and applied progressive traditional sensibilities in developing the coloration. The court jester roundels on the fluted fascia of the gallery have a Wedgwood-type colored background to set off their features and are rimmed with 22-kt. gold leaf, surrounded by laurel wreaths glazed in sage green. Grotesque heads similar to the “Green Man” of legend form the pilaster capitals. In this room “devoted to the Muse Terpsichore, patron of the dance,” according to early literature, are panels atop the balcony windows with acanthus leaf scrolls and a lyre held by two young satyrs, “with the cloven hoof of the goat, suggesting freedom of movement.”

Elizabethan Banquet Room

THIS manly Tudor-style room, named for Elizabeth I of England, reflects an age of awakening to the fine arts and literature, to social refinements, and the spirit of trade, travel, and adventure. Pan-eled walls of English oak give this room a sense of solid strength. Gothic fret work in the ceilings affirm that it is unashamedly first class, a room belonging to the inner circles of the empire. The surrounding



frieze consists of heraldic-style emblems set in wooden panels. Four of the original chandeliers have disappeared along with most of the hotel’s artifacts that slipped away through successive ownerships. In the 1970s the walls were covered in gold-flocked wallpaper, now stripped to reveal the quarter-sawn oak.