



By David M. Brown.

In January 1945, a 28-year-old Massachusetts naval lieutenant began a three-month rehabilitation at Castle Hot Springs, about 50 miles northwest of Phoenix in the Bradshaw Mountains. Here at the luxury resort for American aristocracy – the Vanderbilts, Pews, Rockefellers and Wrigleys – he recovered from a back injury sustained while commanding PT-109 in World War II.

John F. Kennedy convalesced until April 1945, hiking the high-desert trails, playing the resort's golf course and soaking daily in the hot springs, which produce approximately 220,000 gallons daily of pure mineral water from a cistern estimated at 10,000 feet deep. The hot soaks and hikes helped – 15 years later Kennedy became the 35th president of the United States.

After 40-plus years of ghost town conditions following a December 1976 fire, the 220-acre [Castle Hot Springs Resort](#) reopened February 1, featuring many sustainable elements.

The resort was opened in 1896 by Phoenix entrepreneur Frank Murphy, who later promoted it as “a rendezvous for the worn-out businessman or capitalist.” Here, his brother, Territorial Governor Nathan Oakes Murphy, made the first Arizona telephone call in 1902. Today’s guests can repeat this history from a phone booth in the beautifully reconstructed 1896 Lodge House.



Kennedy’s father, businessman and former ambassador to the Court of St. James, Joseph P. Kennedy, knew Walter Rounsevel, the general manager from 1923 to 1963. After rationing and food shortages closed the resort during World War II, Rounsevel leased the

property in 1945 and 1946 to the U.S. Army Air Corps as a “rest center” for recuperating pilots and injured officers like Kennedy. Because of this, the U.S. flag still flies 24 hours daily on Salvation Peak overlooking the resort.

In the spirit of the president, today’s guests will rehabilitate. “Castle Hot Springs will be a tranquil adult retreat with a ‘digital detox’ philosophy. There will be no televisions in the guest rooms, and the wireless signal will be limited to the main lodge,” says Steve Sampson, director of resort sales and marketing, and national sales for the developer and resort manager, Scottsdale-based Westroc Hospitality.

Westroc partners Scott Lyon, Bill Nassikas and Pete Corpstein are well known for the Valley’s Sanctuary Camelback Mountain Resort & Spa, Hotel Valley Ho, and the new Mountain Shadows. To develop Castle Hot Springs, they teamed with longtime Phoenix business owners Mike and Cindy Watts.

Accommodations include rooms in The Lodge; twelve 525-square-foot Spring Bungalows, with indoor/ outdoor gas fireplace and an adjacent private room with an open ceiling; and nineteen 378-square-foot Sky View Cabins, with large covered patios and telescopes for stargazing.



Interior of Spring Bungalow

A spa cabana and relaxation area are available at the upper hot springs. “We have secured the services of professional spa therapists, yoga instructors, wellness consultants, equestrian wranglers, astronomers, and many other industry experts to conduct activities and daily workshops and seminars for our guests,” Sampson explains.

A Longtime Reservation for Sustainability

The hot springs also source in-room drinking, the restaurant, brewing in the Castle Hot Springs Brewery, irrigation, fire hydrants and pools. The water to irrigate the organic farm is recycled.



Exterior of bungalow with outdoor spa

Scottsdale-based green building specialist, Edwards Design Group, incorporated a variety of sustainable elements into the buildings, including high-density spray foam insulation, high-efficiency and long-life LED lighting, and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)-certified lumber for the millwork. Other strategies include passive solar design, ultra-high SEER HVAC systems, and low-e windows and doors. All scrap metal, cardboard, and plastics from the construction debris was recycled. Solar arrays are planned.

In addition, onsite building materials such as stone, sand, and gravel were used whenever possible. The early 20th-century Stone House has been rebuilt with original rock mined from the nearby quarry and will serve as a function room and chapel for special events.

“Our guests will be transported on property only by electric vehicles,” Sampson says.

“We have no disposable plastic items on the property, and all paper, glass, and cardboard will be recycled.”

Amenities Include a Sustainable Farm

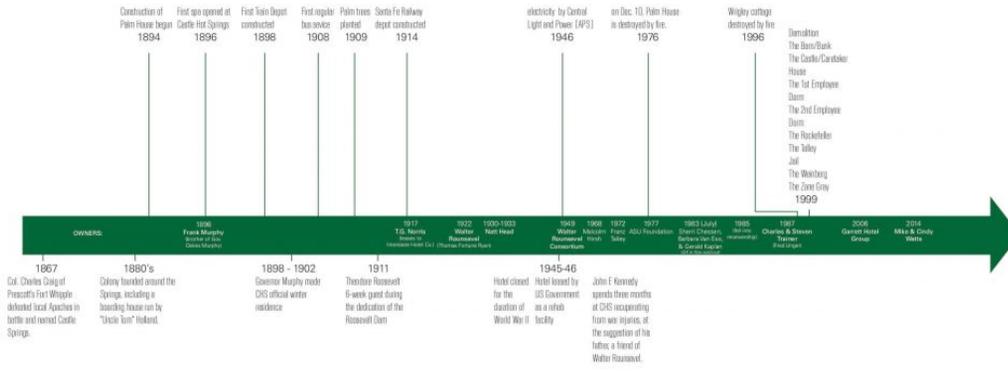
The Harvest restaurant in The Lodge serves a farm-fresh menu prepared by Executive Chef Christopher Brugman, a Le Cordon Bleu graduate and associate of Chef Charles Wiley at Hearth 61 in Mountain Shadows. The Castle Hot Springs Brewery will soon be creating its proprietary Lithium Lager and other fine ales on site.

The Farm at Castle Hot Springs includes a 1,237-square-foot greenhouse, which will yield 150-plus varieties of organic fruits and vegetables for Harvest. “One of my biggest goals is to be as environmentally conscious and sustainable as possible going forward,” says Ian Berger, the owner/lead farmer of Scottsdale’s Brother Nature Farms and the resort agronomist.

All crops are raised organically: pesticide- and herbicide-free, non-GMO with no synthetic fertilizers. Responsible crop rotation is part of the farming cycle, and beneficial insects will be used as required. Berger is also creating a closed-loop compost system to turn farm waste and kitchen scraps into soil for the garden.

“We want Castle Hot Springs to be what it was and even better today,” says resort owner Mike Watts. “We want it to be a haven for our clients to relax, re-center and enjoy their Arizona desert getaway, much as guests did a century ago, and, at the same time, to fulfill their expectations for 21st-century environmental responsibility.”

Castle Hot Springs Timeline



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