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REAL ESTATE

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Guide

ARCHITECTURE

Encantado may open in spring

By Paul Weideman

The long and tortured wait for news about Tesuque's venerable Rancho Encantado is over. The property, once a dude ranch and later a beloved, rustic resort, is being developed as the Lodge at Encantado by Canyon Equities LLC, and will be managed by Auberge Resorts - both California companies.

Nothing is left of the former lodge designed by William Lumpkins.

"We wanted to do one hundred percent new construction," said Encantado general manager Jeff Mahan. "The old lodge was beautiful and historic, but there was really no way to get accomplished what we wanted to if we had retained it."

Mahan was previously general manager at the Inn of the Anasazi and then at El Monte Sagrado Living Resort and Spa in Taos; he was just last May named "Innkeeper of the Year" by the New Mexico Lodging Association for his work with El Monte Sagrado.

He said the Lodge at Encantado, which Auberge plans to open between early June and mid-July, will consist of a main lodge and a spa in a series of five buildings, plus 65 casitas scattered around the 57-acre site.

Rancho del Monte was the name of the dude ranch built on the property by Bess Huntinghouse in 1932. There guests enjoyed western ranch life, including preparing their own meals, feeding the horses, and cleaning the stables.

Illness forced Huntinghouse to close the ranch and it remained vacant until Bill and Barbara Hooten re-opened it in 1954. Under their operation, the ranch was chosen to serve as the setting for a novel called *Guestward Ho*. The ranch gained some fame when the story was adapted for a 1960-61 television situation comedy of the same name. Bill and Babs were played by Mark Miller and Joanne Dru, with J. Carroll Naish as an Indian storekeeper.

In real life the Hootens closed the ranch in the early 1960s and it sat abandoned



A rendering of the Lodge at Encantado. Below, a bedroom in the model casita.

until 1967, when Betty Egan re-opened it as Rancho Encantado. She built it into a resort that was visited by celebrities including Frank Capra, Henry Fonda, Maria Callas, Prince Rainier and Princess Grace of Monaco, and the Dalai Lama. Photographs of many of these personages graced the walls of the lodge before its closure in June 2000.

In 1995, three years after Egan died, her son, John Egan, sold the property to the Coronado Group. In late 1999 it was sold to Rancho del Monte LLC, which brought in Acacia Hotels & Resorts to undertake a \$40 million renovation and expansion project.

In early 2003 Daniel Epstein, a member of the limited-liability company that owned the property at the time, said the ranch would re-open in the spring of 2005. There would be a new spa and fitness center, renovated stables, and the lodge would still be there.

Today all the old buildings are gone and there is no mention of horse-related activities in the Auberge Resorts marketing materials. Instead, spa facilities take center stage in a new Santa Fe referred to as a "spiritual energy center and arts mecca" in the company's Aug. 15, 2007, press release.

"We relish this opportunity to bring our style of soft-spoken luxury, fine cuisine and exceptional spa services to New Mexico," Auberge principal and CEO Mark Harmon says in the release.

The new lodge will surround a central courtyard with a bar, a restaurant designed by the New York firm Avro Ko, and a private dining room all having west-facing terraces to capture the sunsets, Mahan said.



The lodge will boast a 1,300-square-foot foyer and a 2,600-square-foot ballroom.

The 10,000 square-foot spa will incorporate the outdoors with pools, fountains, courtyards, and garden soaking tubs. Healing-arts treatments to be offered at Spa Encantado include massage and bodywork, Ayurvedic rituals, Asian medicine traditions, and Western herbalism featuring organically grown herbs from Marsha Mason's *Resting in the River Farm*. Among the treatment packages are "True Grit Body Treatment" for men and "Awakening the Goddess" for women. A signature spa offering will be "The Ojo Caliente Purification Ritual," which Auberge says draws inspiration from the Ojo Caliente Mineral Springs an hour north of Santa Fe.

The architect on the Encantado project

is Hart/Howerton of New York and San Francisco. Interior design is by Dallas-based Wilson & Associates.

The 65 casitas being developed by Canyon Equities will be offered in the price range of \$475 to \$1,275 a night. Mahan said they will feature elements of stucco, wood, stone, and Corten steel for "a contemporary but somewhat rustic look with a Southwestern motif." The casitas have oversized windows, square-cut wood beams, polished cement flooring, and kiva-style fireplaces.

Mahan said that once the resort is open, Auberge plans to add eight single-family homes averaging 3,500 square feet each.

Auberge Resorts also manages Auberge du Soleil in Rutherford, Calif.; Esperanza in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico; and Inn at Palmetto Bluff in Bluffton, S.C.