



POLITICS

Coakley, Baker spar in first one-on-one TV debate



OPINION

Baker struggles as Coakley finds her zone



BUSINESS

Once-booming struggles to

21 Broad: Ye Olde Nantucket it's not

By Casey Ross | GLOBE STAFF AUGUST 16, 2014

NANTUCKET — The truest signs of 21 Broad Street's restoration are its doors to nowhere.

You find them when you enter the inn's lobby, hanging in their original frames with only solid wall behind them. Unfortunately, opening the doors does not magically transport you onto the deck of a 19th-century whaling ship (unless there's a lever I didn't find); instead, they serve only as a portal into the building's architectural past.



ROB BENCHLEY FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

21 Broad Street is Nantucket's newest inn, housing the bones of one of its oldest.

CONTINUE READING BELOW ▼

Although that past is palpable, a yearlong renovation of the inn, formerly known as the Nesbitt, has transformed it into an unapologetically modern place. Its rooms are decked with iPhone docking stations and vitamin C-infused showers; the basement has a new spa and steam room; and an impossibly large back patio is adorned with ornamental pear trees and a glass-walled fire pit.

Put simply, if you want Ye Olde Nantucket, you're in the wrong place.

“The tastes of Nantucket’s visitors are changing,” said Bruce Percelay, the inn’s owner and founder of The Mount Vernon Co., a Boston real estate development company. “The ye olde aesthetic is starting to fade. The goal of this project was to preserve the outside, but create something modern on the inside that would differentiate it from anything else on the island.”

CONTINUE READING IT BELOW ▼



[View Gallery](#)

RELATED PICTURE

Photos: 21 Broad

MORE COVERAGE

**Two sides of Nantucket: high-end
and on a budget (kind of)**

Percelay and his contractors spent a year rehabilitating the dilapidated High Victorian inn, whose Yelp reviews before its closing for renovations had grown increasingly dire. “DO NOT STAY HERE!” one reviewer warned of the old Nesbitt Inn. “Probably one of the worst hotel experiences I’ve ever had.”

To be fair, the 142-year-old Nesbitt, which was Nantucket’s oldest continuously operating lodging house, was never designed to fit the definition of a modern hotel. It had 16 rooms with shared bathrooms, and served as a rare low-budget option near the center of the island’s quaint commercial square.

The inn sits on a bustling street with ever-present passers-by. It is surrounded by pubs and posh dining options, and it is a couple clicks over from Main Street, whose wavy, undulating pavement is made from the ballast of old whaling ships that once made this island the richest in the world.

The renovated version of the inn, now known as 21 Broad, is about \$600 a night in the summer, and \$275 in the off season. Its transformation is part of a broader wave of change sweeping the island’s lodging houses. More than a half-dozen inns have been built or undergone major renovations in the last few years, including the Chapman House, the Centerboard Inn, and the Gate House Inn. Percelay and his wife, Elisabeth, also gutted and restored the Inn at 76 Main St.

At 21 Broad, the work included the construction of a large addition on the rear of the lot that increased the inn’s room count to 28 and allowed for the installation of an elevator and private baths in each of the rooms.

The most painstaking work was renovating the original lodging house. High Victorians are especially ornate, with all kinds of ornamental brackets, curves, and arches on the exterior, along with intricately carved moldings, hand railings, and other woodworking on the inside.

To meet the preservation guidelines of the National Park Service, Percelay had to refurbish all the plaster moldings with a limestone mixture that was used in the original construction in the 1870s. All the windows had to be saved, along with the dead-end doors in the lobby.

“You can add things, but you can’t pull things out,” Percelay said. “It was a very closely watched process.”



ROB BENCHLEY FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

The modern four-poster bed in Room 211.

Just a day before he opened in July, Percelay said, he got a visit from an inspector who told him that the new wood lattice he installed below the porch wasn't going to work — it was a diamond pattern, the inspector noted, but the historic district commission prefers a square lattice.

The project also involved digging a new basement. The entire 2,400-ton inn had to be lifted while contractors built a water-tight structure with enough room for utilities, employee sleeping quarters, as well as the new massage and steam rooms.

Although the original Victorian details have been carefully restored, the newly-constructed spaces are designed by Boston-based decorator Rachel Reider to look and feel like a contemporary island retreat. The lobby is adorned with bright yellow tables, oak flooring, and a sleek standalone fireplace in the center of the room. The most conspicuous throwback is not a harpoon on the wall, but bins that hold vinyl records for the lobby's music player.

The guest quarters feature four-poster beds and glass-walled showers with stone floors and rainfall shower heads. The most surprising feature of the property is the 1,400-square-foot mahogany deck that spills out from the lobby.

Its sheer size stands in sharp contrast to the covered front porch, offering a refuge where guests gather for breakfast or drinks in the evening. Though decidedly un-Victorian in scale, it is a privilege guests might find more comfortable than strict adherence to history.

“It’s huge and it’s private, you’re in town but you’re far away,” said Percelay. “The idea here is to create a serene refuge where you can get away and relax.”



ROB BENCHLEY FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

The seating in the lobby reflects the inn’s theme of refuge from busy life.

Casey Ross can be reached at cross@globe.com.

0 COMMENTS