

Time Warp

The rebirth of Rhode Island's legendary Ocean House. By **Deborah Geiger**

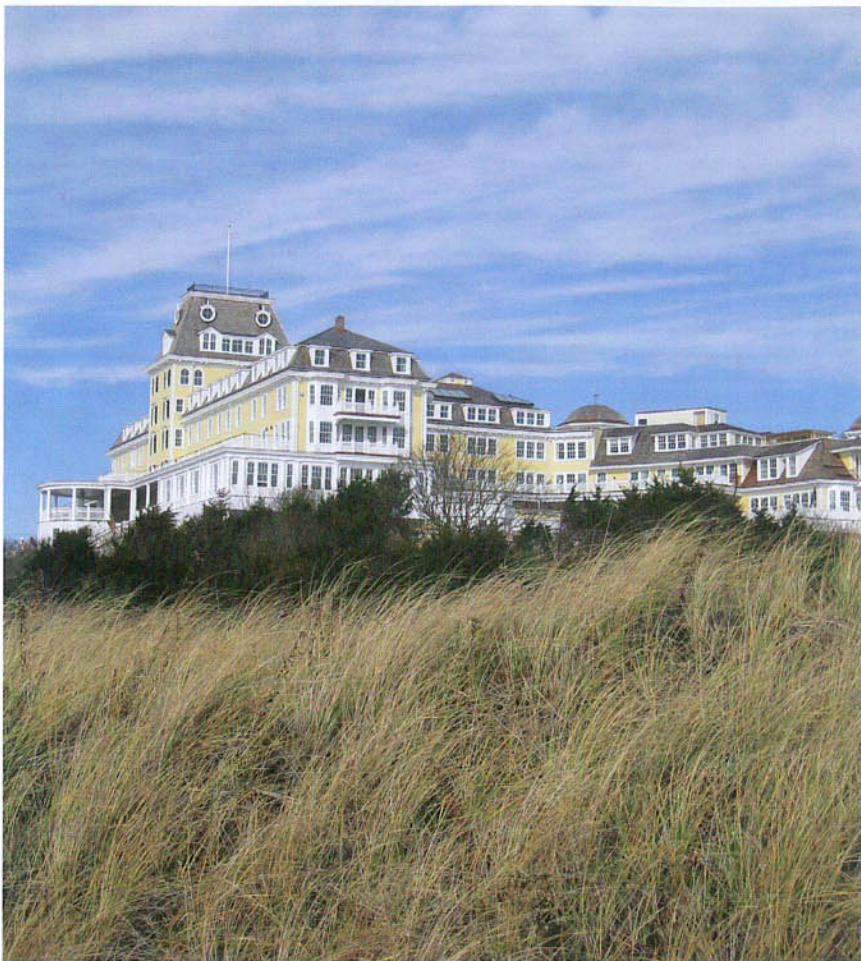
IN ONE OF THE NORTHEAST'S most spectacular historic replication projects to date, Ocean House in Watch Hill, Rhode Island—the Atlantic Ocean-facing, post-Civil War hotel that closed in 2002 after decades of structural damage—has been dismantled and elegantly rebuilt with some stunning new additions.

Connecticut-based Centerbrook Architects and Planners are responsible for the new design of the legendary seaside hotel, replicating the historic canary yellow façade while incorporating two new wings: the north wing, which contains hotel rooms and residential units; and the east wing, comprised of residential units and dug into the hillside running parallel to the beach.

“By 1908, the hotel had reached its pinnacle, its heyday as a grand hotel, its iconic look. We used photographs from this era to replicate the historic kernel exactly,” says Jeff Riley, Centerbrook's founding principal and lead project architect. “Over the years, the hotel had been renovated and elongated, and in the new design, we pulled it back to its original length. The notable French Mansard tower seen in a 1908 photo had been removed and replaced; we restored it.”

Careful attention to original architectural elements lend accuracy and old-world glamour to the new 152,660-square-foot luxury hotel, which opens its doors in June. These elements include dozens of cornices, balustrades, railings, and Doric and Ionic columns, which combine with the more than 5,000 artifacts taken from the original structure, such as balconies, the reception desk, an elevator cab, and even a phone booth.

Because the new Ocean House is almost 50,000 square feet larger than the original, attention was paid to maintain the natural beauty and small-town feel of the private Watch Hill community. “Our challenge was to make a bigger hotel look like a smaller hotel and to meet modern codes and standards while staying true to the original,” Riley says. “We left the historic kernel standing proud.” *Centerbrook Architects and Planners*, 860-767-0175, centerbrook.com; *Ocean House*, 401-315-5599, oceanhouseri.com.



OLDIE BUT GOODIE: Clockwise from top: the completely rebuilt Ocean House; a guest bedroom with a window into the bathroom; the original structure in 1908; a guest bathroom.