

Hub's 'jail hotel' set for its breakout

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By DONNA GOODISON

A National Historic Landmark once deemed unfit for prison inmates has re-emerged as Boston's latest entry to the luxury hotel market.

The Liberty Hotel holds its ribbon-cutting tomorrow following a \$150 million renovation of the former Charles Street Jail, a 19th-century octagonal granite building long closed-off to the law-abiding public.

Thanks to its landmark status, guests of the 298-room hotel with some imagination will still get a sense of what former prisoners, including former Boston Mayor James Michael Curley and anarchists Ferdinando Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, faced in confinement. Boston developer Richard Friedman and his team of architects preserved features of the

former lockup, from jail cells to iron-barred windows to the catwalks once patrolled by prison guards.

"In this area of eco-friendly buildings and smart recycling, it is, without question, the country's most imaginative adaptive reuse project," Friedman said in a statement. "This is a remarkable rebirth."

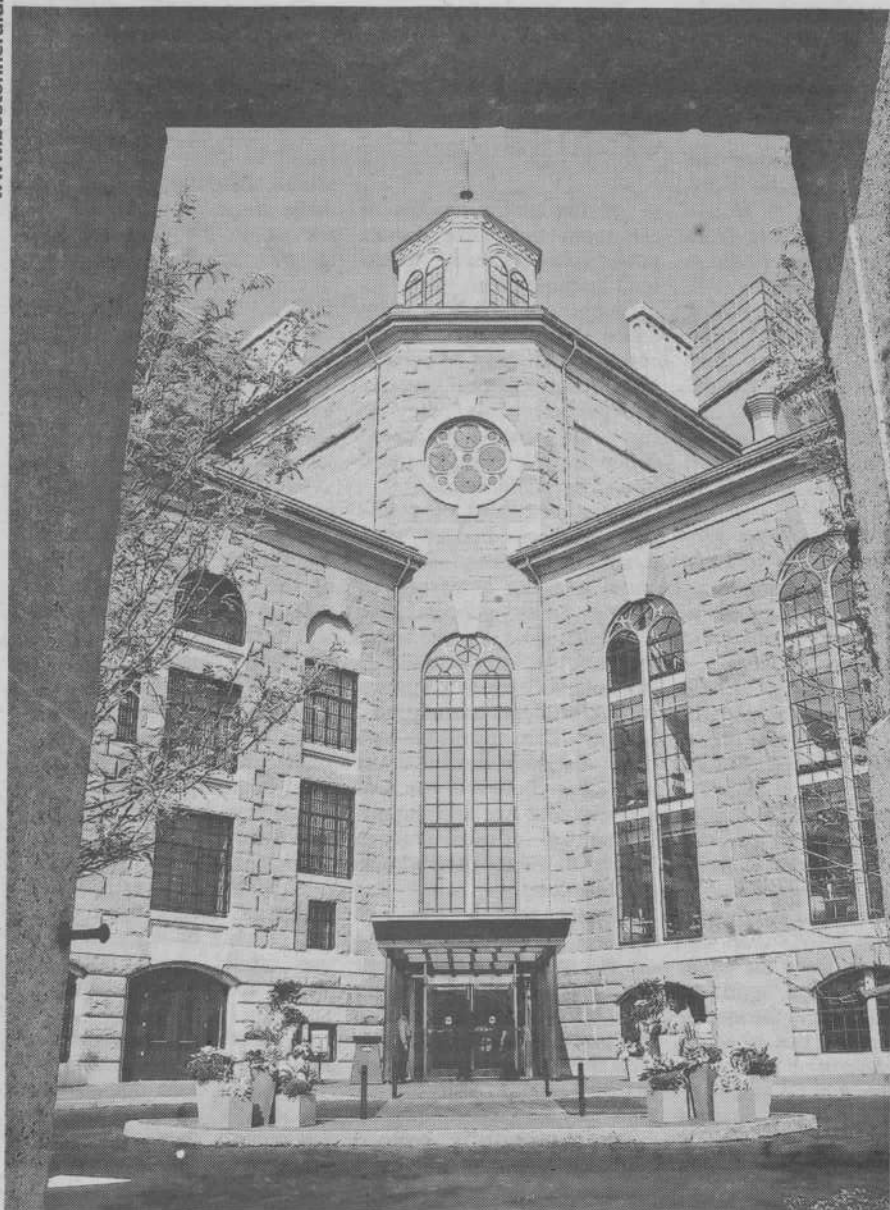
Boston architect Gridley James Fox Bryant designed the jail, which was completed in 1851 and then-considered a model for new prison architecture. In 1973, a U.S. District Court judge ruled that jail conditions violated the constitutional rights of prisoners there, but it wasn't until 1990 when the jail closed and the final inmates were relocated.

Base rates for the property's new guests run \$319 to \$525 for the "fantastic" level of rooms,

the cheapest available. A stay in the 2,200-square-foot presidential suite, which fronts the Esplanade with a balcony and expansive views of Beacon Hill and the Charles River, costs \$5,500 a night.

Guests will enter the hotel at street level, where two Lyons Group-operated venues — The Alibi bar and Scampo, an Italian restaurant under chef Lydia Shire — are on either side of the main entrance. Inside, bellhops will take the luggage of guests, who'll proceed up to the second-floor lobby, taking the escalator past an incarceration-themed tile mosaic by Rhode Island artist Coral Bourgeois. The tiles include mug shots of the infamous, including Jane Fonda with a clenched fist and one of the Manson Girls.

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UPSCALE CLINK: The 298-room Liberty Hotel, whose lobby, restaurants and 18 of its rooms are located in the former 1851-built historic granite Charles Street Jail building, above, features a lobby that has a soaring 90-foot rotunda with some of the lockup's original catwalks used by prisoners and guards, right.



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The lobby, where guests will be treated to champagne and sparkling water, gives view to the jail's original, soaring 90-foot rotunda and its massive circular and arched windows that had long been boarded up.

Later this fall, the hotel will have wireless technology in place that will allow staff to start the guest check-in process as soon as luggage is handed off to the bellhops. Once in the lobby, guests will be handed their keys and escorted to the elevators.

"It's meant to be sort of a respite feel," hotel spokeswoman Regan Dillion said. "You arrive and don't feel hurried at the reception desk."

"Clink.," the hotel-operated restaurant where diners will sit among former jail cells, also is lo-

cated on the second floor, along with its cocktail lounge.

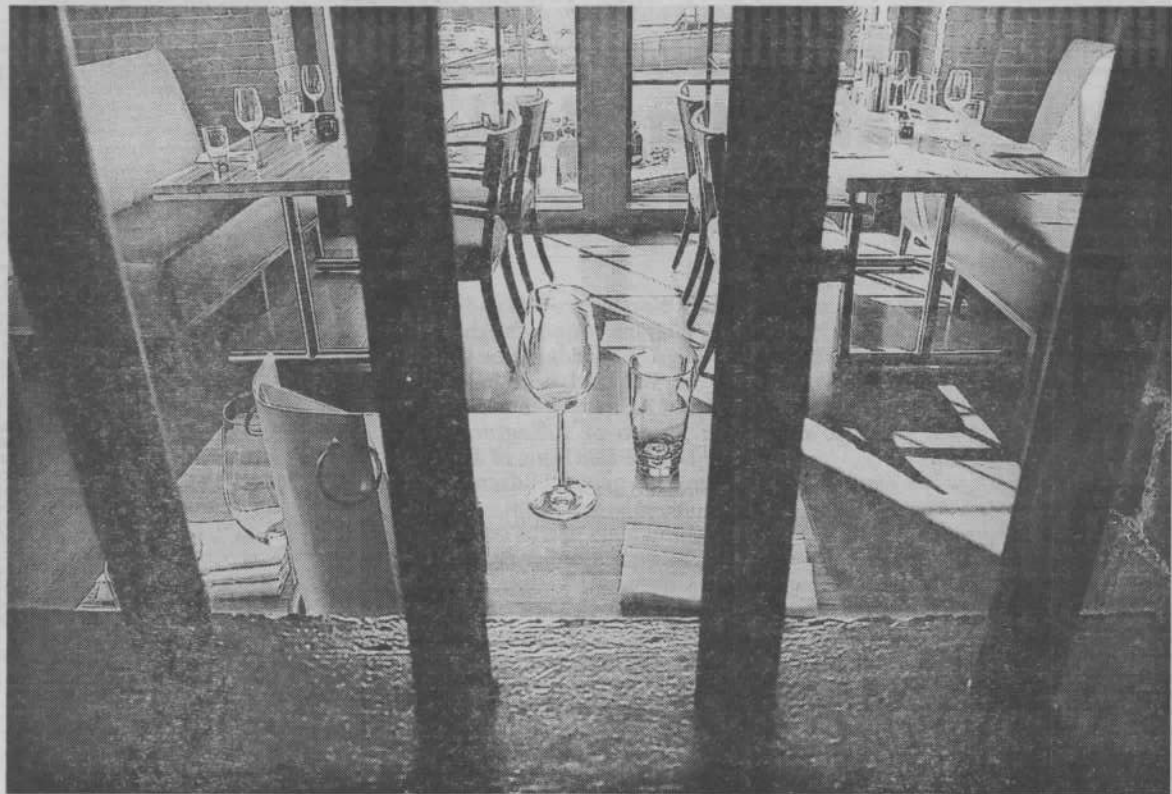
Eighteen of the hotel's 298 rooms are in the original jail, while the others are in a new 16-story tower.

The hotel runs on a fully converged IP network, and guests can access the Internet on their room phones to check flight times, order gifts from the virtual gift shop or search for local restaurants.

All rooms feature flat-panel HD-LCD TVs, floor-to-ceiling windows and amenities such as Dean & DeLuca minibar products, Booty Parlor "Intimacy Kits," cocktail shakers and Molton Brown bath products.

A joint venture of Friedman's Cambridge-based Carpenter & Co. Inc. and MEHP LP of Seattle, the hotel is managed by MTM Luxury Lodging of Kirkland, Wash.

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HERALD PHOTO BY MIKE SPRINGER
CELL REGENERATION: 'Clink.', the hotel-operated restaurant, above, is located among former jail cells on the second floor. Eighteen of the Liberty's 298 rooms are in the original prison.