

## **June 2007 - The House on the Rock Unveils Renovation Plan**

Spring Green/Dodgeville, WI – The House on the Rock Attraction is undergoing its first major remodel in its 50 year history. The renovation will take place in three phases beginning in June of 2007. We are renovating and updating the entrance and exit areas, adding two new gardens, improving our walkways and removing buildings and replacing them with new buildings. The renovation will not involve the collections, the House on the Rock itself or the early structures designed and built by Alex Jordan. The House on the Rock will be open during the renovation.

### **Background**

During the past 20 years the Donaldson family has cared for Alex Jordan's creative legacy at the House on the Rock. The original buildings and vast collections that make up the Attraction draw hundreds of thousands of visitors from all over the world each year. In these years, we have updated our guest services and added new collections to the Attraction; we have also built a hotel, the House on the Rock Inn, located in Dodgeville and acquired the House on the Rock Resort, located near Spring Green.

While the House on the Rock and the collections which make up the Attraction have always earned rave reviews from our guests, we have concluded that some of the buildings and gardens attached to the tours are in need of updating. In the fall of 2006, Tom Kupsh was asked to work with the Donaldsons to develop a concept and site plan for the major renovation. Tom had worked with Alex Jordan in the 1970's and again before Alex's death in 1989. By late December of 2006 Tom had completed the renovation concept and architectural model. Architectural Design Consultants Inc. of Lake Delton, Wisconsin was chosen as the Architectural Firm and Meg Roback AIA is the principal architect on the project. ADCI has a national reputation as a leader in the field of hospitality design; they were the architects for the House on the Rock Inn and we are pleased that they were available. We were equally pleased that Kraemer Brothers Inc., of Plain, WI has agreed to be the General Contractor for the project. Also, joining the team is General Engineering, Inc., of Portage, Wisconsin and Ken Saiki Design, Inc., of Madison, Wisconsin. The model will be put on display for the public in conjunction with our Area Days Celebration on May 20<sup>th</sup>.

### **Phase I**

The projects included in Phase I are a Welcome Center, improved covered walkways and sidewalks, renovation of our Mill Pond and installation of a new waterwheel and the creation of an authentic Japanese Garden.

The Welcome Center is designed to inform and serve our guests. Visitors will be able to get a view of the entire complex, including the House on the Rock itself, from inside the building as well as on the deck overlooking a new Asian Garden. Visitors will also be able to learn about the House on the Rock Inn and Resort and find out about tour options at the Attraction. The design of this and other new buildings will be guided by the architectural work of Alex Jordan. Tom and Meg are working in the design tradition of the architecture of the Arts and Crafts movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century with its

emphasis on the use of native materials including locally quarried limestone, hand-hewn wooden beams and exposed structural elements. The Welcome Center is scheduled for completion in early 2008.

Phase I also includes reconditioning of the mill pond and the installation of a new waterwheel. The Mill House and mill pond have always been a favorite of our guests since the 1960s when Alex built them. We expect renovations of the walkways, mill pond and the installation of our new waterwheel to be completed by the fall of 2007.

Phase I includes what we feel will be a world-class destination feature – an authentic Japanese Garden. Ken Saiki will be responsible for taking Tom’s concept and general design and creating an authentic Japanese Garden. Visitors who remember the early days of the House on the Rock will recall the pond and waterfalls area designed and built by Alex Jordan in the 1960s (he called it the “duck pond”). We are making a glorious return to those days by creating 14 foot quadruple waterfalls that will cascade into the pond of the Japanese Garden. The Garden itself will seem to be something from Kyoto, Japan with every detail carefully designed and installed right down to the Koi in the pond and the “carp stone” at the base of the Dragon Falls. Behind the waterfalls, we will honor the Zen tradition of Japanese gardening by installing a dry garden. Visitors will be able to enter this peaceful refuge through an open gate and walk the stone pathway and even use a traditional Japanese garden rake to form the fine gravel. Here they will also find a dry falls and dry river. The Japanese Garden and the Zen Garden are scheduled for completion for the 2008 season.

## **Phase II**

We plan to begin Phase II of the renovations in the spring of 2008. Phase II includes the Asian Garden, The Alex Jordan Historic Center and the Conservatory.

The Asian Garden will be located outside the Welcome Center (Phase I). The outside deck of the Welcome Center extends out over a waterfall which originates under the deck. From here guests can look out over the Asian Garden and get a view of the whole Attraction including the House on the Rock in the distance. The Asian Garden is designed to be in the Japanese tradition of a hillside and pond garden. The waterfalls will form a stream which ends up in a large pond at the center of the garden. The design of this garden will bring together details from several Asian traditions. We estimate that the Asian Garden and adjoining exit walkway will be completed during the 2008 summer season.

The Alex Jordan Historic Center will be located on the site of our current entrance facility. The building will be a museum of the life and work of Alex Jordan and the House on the Rock. When Alex passed away in 1989, he left behind a great number of notes, drawings, letters and other memorabilia most of which we have kept in storage. We also have in our archives a nearly complete photographic record detailing the creation of the House on the Rock and its exhibits. We have displayed some of these artifacts in

the past and the public response has been enthusiastic; our visitors are very interested in learning more about Alex Jordan and the history of the House on the Rock. We will be exhibiting a great deal of this archival material in the new Alex Jordan Historic Center. Our nearest estimate is that the Center will open in 2009.

During Phase II we will also be building a four-season Conservatory overlooking the Japanese Garden with a view of the House on the Rock in the distance. In the warmer seasons our gardeners will use this space to house delicate, rare and unusual plants and flowers in a protected space. During the colder months this heated space will be a welcome green oasis for our guests. This feature may be open as early as the fall of 2008.

### **Phase III**

We would like to complete the final phase of the renovations by the end of 2010 since that year will be the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the House on the Rock to the public. Phase III includes the renovation of our Plaza, a Restaurant and Retail Center and a “feature to be disclosed later.”

In our new Plaza we will provide space for the hundreds of containers which make up our container gardens and give our visitors a space to enjoy refreshments and food from the new restaurant. Our restaurant will overlook the plaza with a view of the House on the Rock in the distance. We are designing the facility primarily to serve guests within the attraction; however, we are also planning to make the facility available for private after-hours use.

The “feature to be disclosed later” will be another destination feature of grand proportion. All we can say now is that the few people who have looked at the plan for this feature are thrilled. It just may be what everybody will be talking about in the car on their way home. We’re in the process of getting a copyright for the idea and design and we can hardly wait to build this one.

Our target date for completion of Phase III is 2010. Happy 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!

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