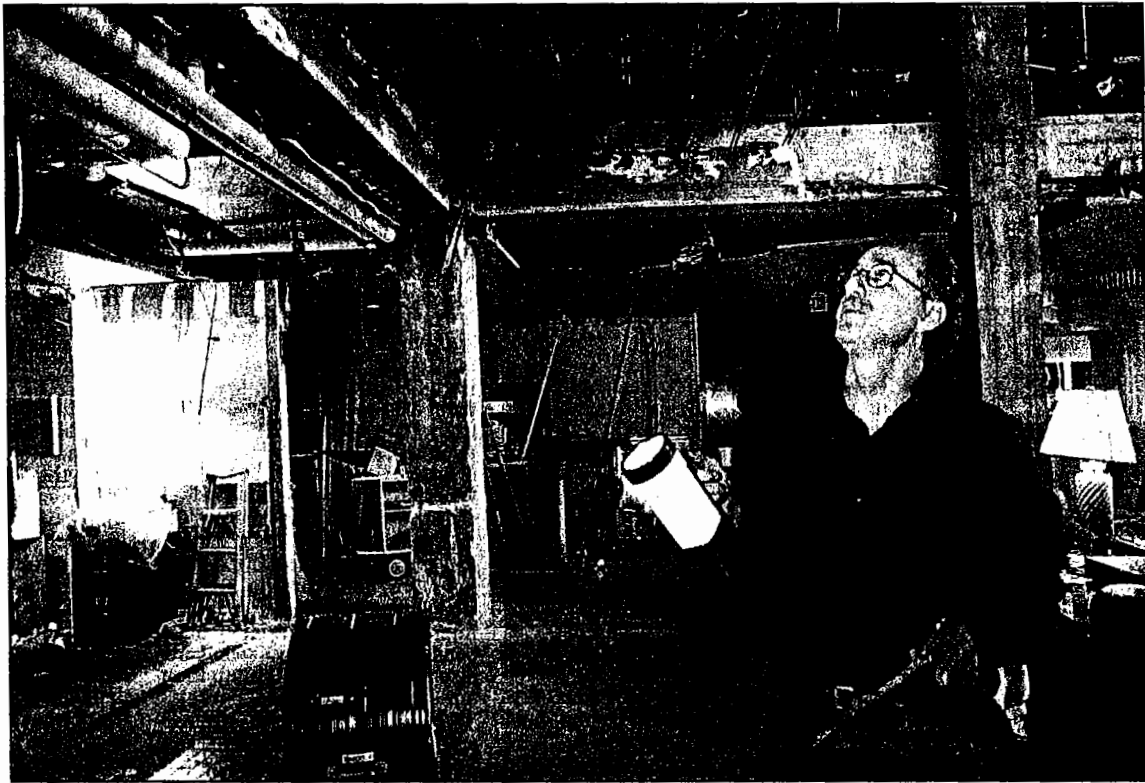


# Hotel seeks its past glory



Mark Matson/Photos for AA-S

'It's like a time capsule,' says Jim Nix, the architect in charge of restoring the Stephen F. Austin Hotel, who inspected ceiling detail Wednesday. 'Every time the building got a new owner, they had a different concept of what would work.'

## Stephen F. Austin Hotel being restored

By R. MICHELLE BREYER  
American-Statesman Staff

Poking through the cluttered lobby of the long-vacant Stephen F. Austin Hotel, a visitor can see the hotel's ever-changing history.

Mirrors that covered the lobby walls two owners ago are now stacked against a wall, awaiting removal. The wood paneling that covered the mirrors in a subsequent renovation is stacked against another wall. Ancient treasures are hidden elsewhere in the hotel.

The hotel's latest owner, Highgate Holdings, has had it with cover-ups.

It is stripping the hotel to its bare bones in an effort to return it to its original 1924 splendor. If plans hold, the Stephen F. Austin Hotel will reopen next spring with a new marble staircase, granite floors and many of the other features that made it one of the city's most prestigious hotels.

The hotel bar and the Remington Room restaurant — a place where cattle barons and politicians once held court — will be restored. A cigar bar will be built above the bar, with French doors to the veranda that wraps around the hotel.

"That was a grand style," said Tom Stacy, local partner with Highgate Holdings, owned by the Khimji family,



'Over the years, it lost any tie to the period in which it was built,' Tom Stacy, local partner with Stephen F. Austin Hotel owner Highgate Holdings, says of the many remodelings that the building has undergone since its opening in 1924.

which has holdings in Dallas and Vancouver, British Columbia. "Over the years, it lost any tie to the period in which it was built."

Highgate purchased the Stephen F. Austin on April 15, 10 years after the 200-room hotel on the corner of Congress Avenue and East Seventh Street closed its doors.

Stacy said he is negotiating with several hotel companies about putting their flag on the property.

Plans call for a 187-room luxury boutique hotel. He said Highgate is working with consultants to determine whether Austin could support a high-dollar hotel

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