

Stephen F. Austin Hotel's owner seeking to restore its past glory

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along the lines of a Ritz-Carlton.

If the costs are too high, the building might be developed for another use. A national apartment developer is interested in buying the hotel, Stacy said.

Stacy said he will know within 45 to 60 days whether the hotel project will work. He said he is confident the company will move forward with the hotel.

"Our intentions are the same as they've been since Day One," Stacy said.

A 10-person crew began work on the hotel several months ago. Carpeting has been ripped up, wallpaper has been stripped down, and tile has been removed. Trash bins have been filled daily with debris.

A "garage sale" is scheduled for June 30 to sell furnishings and other items that weren't sold at an impromptu sale in March, Stacy said.

"We're doing the things that have to be done, no matter what its use," Stacy said. "We haven't lost a day's time."

The Stephen F. Austin Hotel opened with fanfare in 1924 and in its heyday hosted Texas luminaries. When it closed in 1987, Austin was in the midst of an economic bust that closed many businesses around the city.

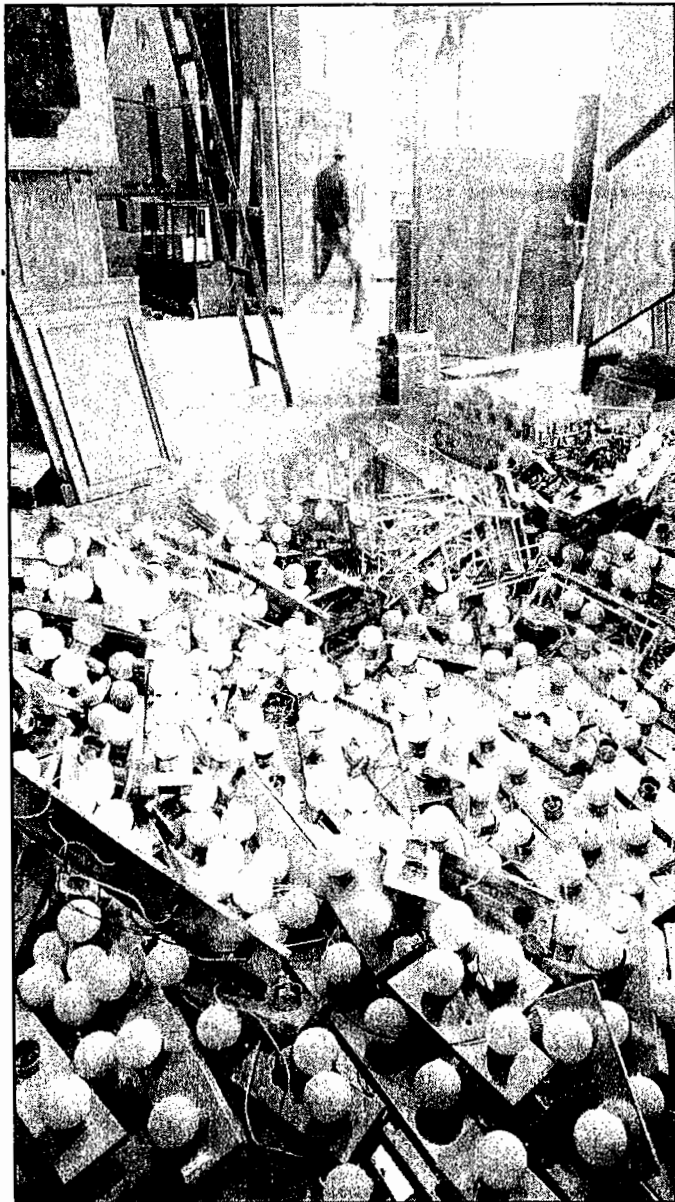
The hotel's style and decor changed as ownership changed over the years.

"Every time the building got a new owner, they had a different concept of what would work," said Jim Nix, the architect in charge of restoring the hotel.

Nix has been researching the hotel's history, poring through documents from the Travis County archives. He has found some of the original architecture drawings.

The best source of information about the hotel's history has been the hotel itself, with treasures popping up throughout the building. Elaborate crown molding was hidden beneath drywall. Green marble lined a basement staircase. Granite lurked beneath carpet.

"It's like a time capsule," Nix said.



Mark Matson/For AA-S

A pile of light fixtures rests near the entry of the Stephen F. Austin Hotel. A 'garage sale' is scheduled for Monday to sell some of the downtown building's old furnishings and other items.