

House Beautiful

This Onetime "Green Book" Hotel Is Reopening After More Than 50 Years

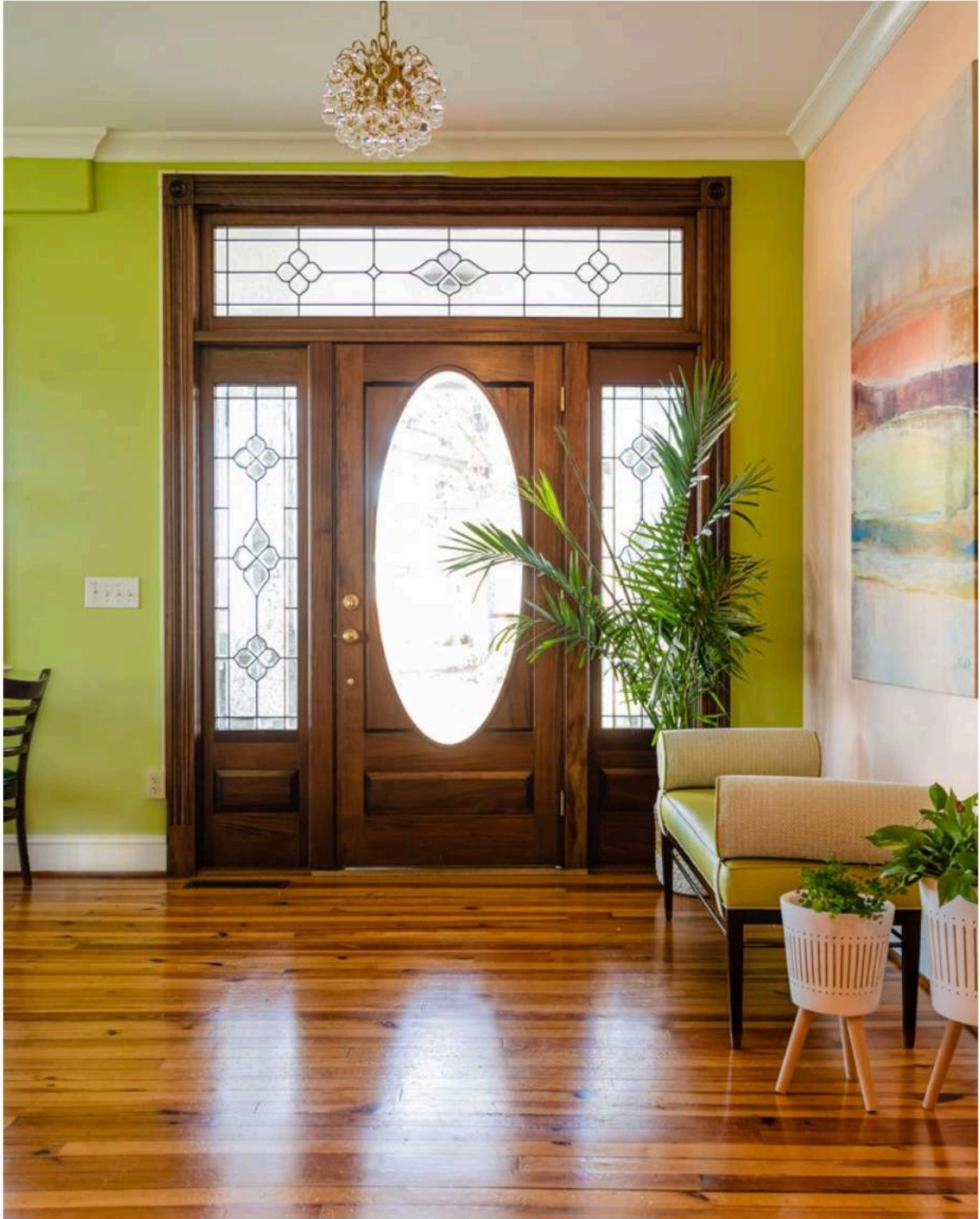
The North Carolina hotel was a refuge for African-American travelers during segregation in America.



BY KRISTIN TABLANG DEC 15, 2021



For the first time in over 50 years, Greensboro's Historic Magnolia House will reopen next month as both a tribute to and a near visual replica of its former self: one of the few hotels in the Southern United States that allowed Black travelers to stay overnight in the mid-1900s, due to restrictions imposed by Jim Crow laws (which legalized racial segregation).



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The establishment became well-known after it was featured in six editions of *The Negro Motorist Green Book*, a popular resource for African-American roadtrippers created by Victor H. Green in 1949, the same year Magnolia House was founded. “Green included hidden safety tips within the book and readers eventually came to know where to look within the publication for those tips,” explains Natalie Miller, the hotel’s owner and founder of the [Magnolia House Foundation](#). “Its main function was to list safe places for African-American travelers to stay, eat, and visit, but it really did offer more than just a list—it was a crucial safety communication tool.”

The hotel—which served as a sanctuary for many prominent Blacks, including Ray Charles, Jackie Robinson, Ike and Tina Turner, Gladys Knight, James Baldwin, and Louis Armstrong—is one of only four Green Book institutions still operating in North Carolina. Redesigned by local design firm [Vivid Interiors](#) (which drew inspiration from a classic 1960s jazz lounge), the revamped hotel is almost identical to the way it looked when it first launched 72 years ago.

“The full staircase in the house, including both the stairs themselves as well as the hand railings, are original to the historic Green Book hotel,” Miller says. “There are also some tiles on various fireplaces throughout the house as well as wooden components like parts of the flooring that were original to the 1949 hotel.”

The lovingly updated spread showcases a rich palette featuring bold hues, from neon pink and teal to chartreuse—along with a smattering of other viridescent spaces (a nod to its Green Book history). The boutique lodge comprises four guest suites, each named and designed to reflect the spirit of famous former guests.



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While The Carlotta room fetes the Queens of Soul (Knight and Turner), The Legends room pays homage to sports superstars such as Robinson. The Baldwin room honors African-American intellectuals like the renowned writer, while the Kind of Blue celebrates the friendship between iconic musician Miles Davis and the hotel's original owner, Buddy Gist.

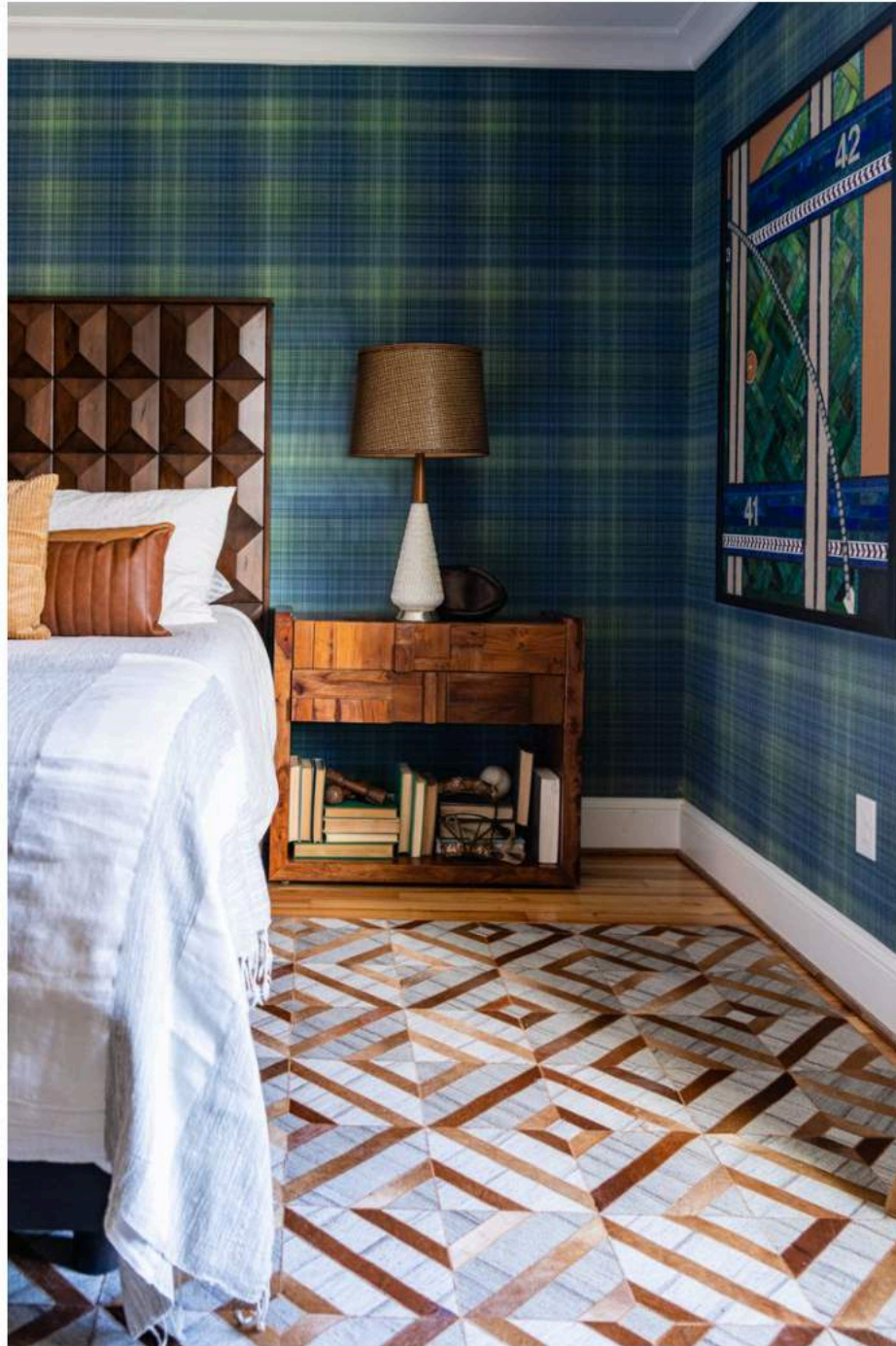


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The hotel's on-site restaurant will revive its signature Sunday Brunch, showcasing classic Southern dishes such as creamy grits and fried fish. In addition, the kitchen will offer "shoebox lunches"—a tribute to the packed meals Black travelers would often carry on the road.

Miller's father, Sam Pass, purchased the rundown building—located minutes from downtown Greensboro—in 1996 and immediately began restoring the long-neglected property, which had fallen into disrepair in the 1970s.

"It means the world to me to be able to continue the important work my dad did," Miller says. "I'm honored to carry his vision across the finish line and see it activated. When you hear about carrying on family legacies and businesses, you often think of that relationship between father and son—but in our story, it is the special father-daughter relationship that is keeping The Historic Magnolia House going after all these years.



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“Restoring this property is our way of continuing our family’s legacy and carrying on the great work and activism that the African-American pioneers of our family accomplished,” she continues. “We are saving this significant piece of Black history, and we’re honored to be able to uncover its untold story and share it with the world.”



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Rates at the historic hotel—which will also double as a venue for weddings and other private events—start at \$200 per night. Ready to book a stay? [Right this way!](#)
