

Case Study: The Heirloom Hotel

Restoring Laurel's Legacy Through Hospitality, History, and Performance

FORTE
OPENING SOLUTIONS



Door Solutions in Hospitality

INDUSTRY

Hospitality

LOCATION

Laurel, MS

PROJECT PARTNERS

Michael McKinnon Architecture

mma-arch.com

LaForce

laforceinc.com**About The Heirloom Hotel**

Located in the heart of downtown Laurel, Mississippi, The Heirloom Hotel is breathing new life into one of the city's most historically significant landmarks. The former 25,000-square-foot Kress department store, vacant for more than 40 years, is being transformed into a boutique hospitality destination featured on HGTV's limited series *Home Town: Inn This Together*.

For Forte Opening Solutions, the project carries a particularly meaningful connection rooted in its heritage as Masonite Architectural. The company's origins trace back to Laurel through Masonite, whose presence helped shape the city's growth throughout the twentieth century. Many Masonite employees once gathered in the very spaces now being transformed into The Heirloom Hotel, creating a rare full-circle moment where history, craftsmanship, and community intersect.

**Project Background****Breathing New Life Into a Landmark That Helped Shape Laurel**

When the team behind The Heirloom Hotel set out to transform a historic downtown property into a boutique hospitality destination, the goal extended far beyond renovation. They sought to preserve an important piece of Laurel's identity while creating a destination that would celebrate the city's past and contribute to its future.

The project gained national attention through HGTV's *Home Town: Inn This Together*, which documented the restoration and showcased the passion, creativity, and collaboration required to bring the vision to life. Throughout the process, preserving the building's character remained a central priority. Original architectural details, historic influences, and the stories tied to the property all informed the design approach.

For Forte, the project represented an opportunity to contribute to a building deeply connected to the company's own history. What was once part of the everyday experience for generations of Masonite employees is designed to become a destination welcoming visitors from across the country.

The Challenge**Preserving Historic Character While Meeting Modern Hospitality Standards**

Historic restoration projects often require a careful balance between preservation and performance. The Heirloom Hotel was no exception.

The project team needed door solutions that would complement the building's historic aesthetic while satisfying modern hospitality expectations for safety, durability, and functionality. Openings throughout the property required a consistent appearance that aligned with the overall design vision, while select locations also needed to meet fire-rating, life-safety, and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility requirements.

Adding to the complexity, the renovation was taking place under the demanding schedule documented throughout the HGTV series. Every element needed to arrive on time, coordinate with surrounding trades, and support the project's ambitious timeline without compromising quality.

The challenge wasn't simply supplying doors—it was helping ensure that modern building requirements could coexist with the authenticity and character that made the property worth preserving in the first place.

The Solution**Door Solutions Designed to Support Restoration and Hospitality**

Working closely with LaForce (Target Door and Supply) and the broader project team, Forte Opening Solutions provided a coordinated package of molded-panel and stile & rail door systems designed to complement the building's historic character while meeting modern code and performance requirements.



Project Overview

- **Historic 25,000-sq-ft Kress department store** transformed into a boutique hospitality destination
- Restoration featured on **HGTV's limited series *Home Town: Inn This Together***
- Heritage-driven connection to Forte's origins as **Masonite Architectural in Laurel, Mississippi**
- **Molded-panel and stile & rail door systems** supplied throughout the property
- **Factory-finished openings** coordinated to support the curated interior design vision
- **Fire-rated and non-rated openings** provided to meet accessibility, life-safety, and hospitality requirements
- Collaborative coordination with **LaForce (Target Door and Supply)** to meet an accelerated renovation schedule
- Door systems contributed to the **preservation and protection of a significant downtown landmark**

The solution included a combination of fire-rated and non-rated openings throughout the property, factory-finished to maintain a consistent appearance and reduce field finishing requirements. Custom colors were selected to align with the project's carefully curated interior design palette, helping reinforce the warm, welcoming atmosphere envisioned for future guests.

Beyond aesthetics, the doors were prepared to accommodate the required hardware, ADA, and life-safety components, ensuring each opening contributes to both the intended guest experience and the overall functionality of the building.

The result was a collection of door systems that felt authentic to the history of the property while delivering the performance expected from a modern hospitality environment.

The Result

A Boutique Destination Rooted in Heritage and Built for the Future

While the property is not yet operational due to an unexpected fire that happened during construction, The Heirloom Hotel stands as a celebration of Laurel's history, craftsmanship, and sense of community. The fire underscored the critical role fire-rated openings play in helping compartmentalize fire and protect adjacent spaces. The project demonstrated the importance of performance in preservation-focused environments, especially in historic restoration, where that protection helps safeguard both physical structures and the stories they contain.

In response to these rigorous demands, Forte's door solutions were integrated throughout the property to reinforce the character of the restored interiors while supporting the safety and operational requirements of a future hospitality destination. The hotel was designed to welcome guests with thoughtfully appointed spaces that connect to the building's past without sacrificing comfort or functionality.

For Forte, The Heirloom Hotel represents more than a successful hospitality project. It reflects a meaningful connection to Laurel's history and an opportunity



Working with a company like Forte Opening Solutions (formerly Masonite Architectural) that started in Laurel, using original chips to build products, was a dream.””

Josh Nowell
Co-owner,
The Heirloom Hotel

to contribute to the preservation of a landmark that continues to shape the community today.

The Project Team

Collaboration Rooted in Community and Craftsmanship

The Heirloom Hotel was brought to life through the collaboration of ownership, design, construction, manufacturing, and distribution partners who shared a commitment to preserving an important piece of Laurel's history.

[Michael McKinnon Architect \(MMA\)](#) is a Laurel Mississippi-based firm with industrial, institutional, cultural, commercial and residential projects built nationally. MMA is a collaborative design practice that explores new prospects for the built environment through their integration of architectural, urban, and landscape. Using focused, inventive, and strategic thinking, MMA has been able to diversify their client base and project typology. MMA is able to rely on years of experience in the construction industry and their appreciation for community engagement.

[LaForce](#) is a national distributor of door opening products, frames, hardware, building specialties, and security solutions. The company provides integrated services—including architectural support, keying, fire door inspections, pre finishing, pre install and install services, and electronic security—backed by a national footprint and regional service teams. Headquartered in Green Bay, Wisconsin, LaForce combines broad resources with local responsiveness to support distributors, contractors, and building owners across the United States.

[Forte Opening Solutions](#) delivers a full range of commercial door systems and components designed to meet performance needs and design priorities across education, healthcare, hospitality, and office spaces. Previously known as Masonite Architectural, Forte Opening Solutions is backed by a legacy of trusted brands, including Marshfield DoorSystems, Algoma Hardwoods, Mohawk Doors, Baillargeon, and Harring. Forte is committed to making every door, every interaction, and every opening unforgettable.

forteopenings.com

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