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# HISTORIC HOTELS of AMERICA

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National Trust *for* Historic Preservation®

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## **Kelly and Duane Roberts to Receive 2024 Historic Hotels of America® Steward of History and Historic Preservation Award**

Washington, DC, August 8, 2024 ---Historic Hotels of America® is pleased to announce Kelly and Duane Roberts have been named recipients of the 2024 Historic Hotels of America® Steward of History and Historic Preservation Award.

Historic Hotels of America is the official program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation for recognizing and celebrating the finest Historic Hotels in the United States. This award is presented annually to hoteliers who have shown exemplary dedication and investment in the preservation of a historic hotel. The 2024 Historic Hotels of America Steward of History and Historic Preservation Award honors the extensive accomplishments of Kelly and Duane Roberts for their preservation and stewardship of [The Mission Inn Hotel & Spa in Riverside California](#). Dating to 1876, The Mission Inn Hotel & Spa was designated a National Historic Landmark by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior in 1977, and it was inducted into Historic Hotels of America in 1996.

Kelly and Duane Roberts will be presented with The 2024 Historic Hotels of America Steward of History and Historic Preservation Award at the [2024 Historic Hotels Annual Conference](#) in front of an audience of owners, general managers, and other senior decision makers representing many of the finest historic hotels from across the United States of America and from around the world. The annual conference will be held this year at The Omni Homestead Resort in Hot Springs, Virginia, on November 18-22. The Historic Hotels Annual Awards of Excellence Ceremony and Gala will be held at 7 p.m. November 21.

Kelly and Duane Roberts made preservation history in the early 1990s when the couple rescued The Mission Inn Hotel & Spa from the brink of demolition, resurrecting the property's iconic Spanish Mission-style opulence while modernizing the hotel with comfort and technology, shopping, wedding venues, culinary excellence, and spa amenities. Today, they oversee the much-acclaimed, AAA Four Diamond award-winning historic hotel. Through their leadership, they have created and brought to life annual events such as the Festival of Lights, Festa dell'Amore, and the Pumpkin Stroll, as well as immersive additions to The Mission Inn Hotel & Spa, like Kelly's Spa and Boutique and dynamic culinary venues.

“Historic Hotels of America is pleased to recognize Kelly and Duane Roberts for their passion and dedication since 1992 to the historic preservation and stewardship of The Mission Inn Hotel & Spa,” said Lawrence P. Horwitz, Executive Vice President Historic Hotels of America and Historic Hotels Worldwide. “Through their personal efforts and financial support, they have contributed significantly to the preservation, restoration, recognition, and celebration of The Mission Inn Hotel & Spa in Riverside, California. Their dedication of time and resources

continues to enhance this important historic hotel, which was previously designated a National Historic Landmark by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior.”

Throughout its storied past, The Mission Inn Hotel & Spa has hosted famous scholars, artists, politicians, and writers. The hotel was the setting for numerous 20th century Hollywood productions including *The Vampire* (1915), *Idiot’s Delight* (1938), and *Man in the Iron Mask* (1997). Presidents Roosevelt, Taft, Hoover, Nixon, Reagan, and W. Bush; thought leaders and groundbreakers such as Booker T. Washington, Susan B. Anthony, Amelia Earhart, Albert Einstein, Helen Keller, and John Muir; and entertainers including Judy Garland, Bette Davis, Clark Gable, Tom Hanks, Barbra Streisand, Raquel Welch and James Brolin have all been guests at the hotel.

Entrepreneur Frank Miller established The Mission Inn Hotel in the late-19th century and operated it until his death in 1935. His family managed the hotel until the mid-1950s, after which it changed hands multiple times and was at risk of demolition until Kelly and Duane Roberts purchased the iconic property in the late 1980s. Upon establishing The Historic Mission Inn Corporation, they embarked on a seven-year, \$55 million renovation and eventually reopened the hotel in its full glory in 1992. Kelly Roberts, Co-Owner and Chief Operating Officer, was determined to maintain The Mission Inn Hotel & Spa’s reputation as a premier luxury California destination. She developed the hotel’s award-winning spa and has been instrumental in the success of its annual Festival of Lights worldwide attraction alongside her husband, Duane Roberts.

The Mission Inn Hotel & Spa's Festival of Lights is one of the nation's largest holiday light displays. Every year, this festival gains new energy, grows in popularity, and ushers in an increasing number of visitors to the Riverside area. In recent years, it has consistently been in a top ten place for "Best Public Lights Display" in the USA Today 10Best Readers' Choice contest. Building on the success of the Festival of Lights, Kelly and Duane Roberts created a new festival, Festa dell’Amore, to celebrate romance and love for the entire month of February.

"We are profoundly honored to receive the 2024 Historic Hotels of America Steward of History and Historic Preservation Award. As Keepers of The Historic Mission Inn Hotel & Spa, we are deeply committed to preserving the unique legacy and architectural splendor of this iconic landmark. This award is a testament to the collective efforts of our dedicated team, the support of our guests, and the vibrant community of Riverside and Southern California. We are grateful to Historic Hotels of America for recognizing our passion for historic preservation and our dedication to continuing our work in safeguarding this treasured piece of history for future generations," said Kelly and Duane Roberts, Keepers of the Inn.

An unyielding commitment to philanthropy defines Kelly and Duane’s lives and careers. Revered institutions like The Kennedy Center and Pepperdine University Board of Trustees have welcomed Kelly’s support on their boards. Kelly and Duane Roberts have also been recognized with the City of Hope's Humanitarian Award for their generosity. Kelly continues to support causes near and dear to her through her namesake foundation, the Kelly Roberts Foundation. The Roberts family also invests in their community through charities and non-profit organizations in Southern California. These include the Loma Linda University Children’s Hospital Foundation,

Olive Crest, CHOC, Hoag, Mission Hospital, and the Mary S. Roberts Foundation that supports charitable causes ranging from helping children with special needs, the homeless and hungry, and animal assistance.

The 2024 Historic Hotels Awards of Excellence Ceremony and Gala will take place at The Omni Homestead Resort—an award-winning resort dating to 1766 and also designated a National Historic Landmark—in Hot Springs, Virginia on Thursday, November 21, 2024, at 7 pm. Ceremony and Gala Tickets are \$500. To register for the ceremony and gala, [click here](#).

### **About Historic Hotels of America®**

Historic Hotels of America® is the official program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation for recognizing and celebrating the finest historic hotels across America. The National Trust for Historic Preservation was chartered by U.S. Congress in 1949 and is a private 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. The National Trust for Historic Preservation is leading the movement to save places where our history happened. To be nominated and selected for membership in this prestigious program, a hotel must be at least 50 years old; designated by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior as a National Historic Landmark, or listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places; and recognized as having historical significance. Of the more than 300 historic hotels inducted into Historic Hotels of America from 45 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, all historic hotels faithfully preserve their sense of authenticity, sense of place, and architectural integrity.

### **About The Mission Inn Hotel & Spa**

The AAA Four Diamond Historic Mission Inn Hotel & Spa has remained faithful to the grand style and ambiance enjoyed by its first guests. Today's Mission Inn continues the original splendor. Expanding from its humble 1876 origins to encapsulate an entire city block, the Mission Inn offers luxurious boutique accommodations and amenities, only a quick jaunt from Los Angeles and Orange County, featuring enchanting, unique architecture with awe-inspiring archways, soaring domes and towers. Offering multiple upscale dining options, fitness center, Conde Nast award-winning Kelly's Spa, a lushly landscaped outdoor pool, and opulent rooms that transport guests to California's foregone eras, the iconic hotel provides a one-of-a-kind experience threaded with rich history. Historic Hotels of America®, an official program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, announced its 2024 Top 25 Historic Hotels of America® Most Literary Hotels List. The Historic Mission Inn Hotel & Spa proudly holds the fourth position on this prestigious list.

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