



## **First Gala Night at Chicago's Legendary Blackstone Hotel April 4, 2008**

Chicago, IL, March 25, 2008 --(PR.com)-- Following a lavish \$128 million dollar renovation, Chicago's legendary Blackstone Hotel, newly restored to its original glory, is being celebrated with a roaring gala honoring philanthropist Richard H. Driehaus on Friday evening, April 4, 2008, at 6:30 p.m. with cocktails, dinner, music, dancing, a display of antique cars and more. Only 200 tickets will be available.

At this long-anticipated opening, Driehaus will receive the first annual prize awarded by the Benjamin Marshall Society to recognize individuals exemplifying the ideals of the renowned architect, Benjamin Marshall (1874-1944), architect of the Blackstone Hotel, located on the corner of Michigan Avenue and Balbo.

The ticket price for this lavish event will include a welcome in the Grand Lobby to the sound of the Columbia College Jazz Band, a champagne reception in the historic Art Gallery, a Gala Dinner in the Grand Ballroom with the Joe Vito Orchestra performing hits from the 20's, and a chance to bid on two luxury prize packages including a stay for a party of eight in the Blackstone Presidential Suite, and, a brunch for twenty-five at the Lake Geneva Estate of Richard H. Driehaus. Tables for ten will be available for \$10,000, \$5,000, or \$3,000. Individual tickets for \$300 and \$200 are also available at first come first serve. Black-tie is optional.

In keeping with the Blackstone's illustrious history and Benjamin Marshall's love of theatrics, the evening will also include exciting surprises, in tribute to the flamboyant personal style of Benjamin Marshall, architect of theaters across the country and many other Chicago landmark buildings. "He loved gadgetry and all sorts of novelties which is also why the roof of the Blackstone has a landing pad for a dirigible equipped with anchor hooks and landing lights. He was whimsical and exuberant, and loved a great party," says Jane Lepauw, president and co-founder of the Benjamin Marshall Society. "This will be a major Chicago event - an historic event."

For more information and reservations, call 312 372 3465 or  
Email at: [Info@BenjaminMarshallSociety.org](mailto:Info@BenjaminMarshallSociety.org)

Detailed Information Follows

Columbia College is presenting two ensembles from their Jazz Program directed by Scott Hall with one performing in the Grand Lobby, and the other in the Art Gallery during the champagne reception.

Joe Vito will lead The Joe Vito Orchestra, from a newly introduced-to-the-Chicago-area, Grand Sauter Piano, thanks to the generosity of the Family Piano Company of Waukegan.

The Blackstone Hotel

Designed by Benjamin Marshall and his partner, engineer Charles Fox, the Blackstone Hotel was built in 1908-1910 by hoteliers Tracy and John Drake and named for Timothy Blackstone, the president of the



Illinois Central Railroad, whose mansion stood on the site. According to the City of Chicago Commission on Chicago Landmarks, it is Chicago's "best example of a turn-of-the-century luxury hotel [and] represents - both its exterior and interior - an excellent and rare example of the Modern French style of Beaux Arts Classical Revival architecture." It was known as the Hotel of Presidents. "With the exception of Lyndon Johnson and Gerald Ford, every president from William Taft through Jimmy Carter stayed there," says Lepauw, "and both Warren J. Harding and Harry Truman were nominated for president in the Blackstone." The "smoke-filled rooms" made famous by a reporter covering the 1920 presidential convention were the rooms of the Blackstone in which Warren G. Harding was chosen as the Republican nominee.

The restoration of the Blackstone Hotel is historically, artistically and socially significant. A masterpiece of early 20th-century Beaux Arts Classical Revival architecture, it has been an important Chicago landmark for a century. The re-opening this year takes place 100 years after construction began in 1908. In its heyday, the Blackstone attracted hundreds of luminaries from the political and theatrical spheres, including stars of stage and film and legendary jazz and classical musicians.

In addition, the Blackstone is close to the heart of many Chicago-area residents as one of several Benjamin Marshall hotels that have been the location for thousands of engagements, weddings and proms. "Everybody has fallen in love in one or another of his buildings," says Benjamin Marshall co-founder, Didier Lepauw.

The Blackstone will be operated as a Renaissance Hotel.

### Benjamin Marshall

Benjamin Marshall lived from 1874 to 1944. He became an architect after starting his career as a clothing designer. "At age 19," says Lepauw, "he saw Daniel Burnham's White City at the 1893 World Columbian Exposition and decided he wanted to be an architect. Two years later he was a full-fledged partner in the architectural firm of Marble and Marble, shortly after which he started his own firm teaming up with engineer, Charles Fox. Marshall quickly became one of Chicago's most prolific architects. He designed the Blackstone and Drake hotels, both part of the Chicago's Magnificent Mile district, for his childhood friends Tracy and John Drake, as well as the renowned Edgewater Beach Hotel. He excelled at Beaux Arts Classical Revival design, and is credited for at least 60 mansions across the country, as well as grand theaters and some of Chicago's first full-floor luxury apartment buildings, moving Chicago's wealthy from Prairie Avenue to the Gold Coast.

Marshall was awarded the first American Institute of Architects (AIA) Prize in Chicago in 1909, for his design of the Blackstone Hotel. He dedicated the prize to his father, Caleb Marshall, who died that year.

In his private life as well as in some of his designs, Marshall was flamboyant and whimsical, say Jane and Didier Lepauw, with a flair for the unusual and a deep love for the theater and its performers. He threw lavish parties for his friends, in Great Gatsby style, and filled his home and the buildings he designed with works of art, many of which he collected in his travels around the world. "He was a true bon vivant," Jane



Lepauw says, "as well as something of an eccentric. He wore white suits that he designed himself, labeled his plans in French, installed a retracting roof on his own swimming pool and a dirigible landing pad on the roof of the Blackstone."

Perhaps most importantly, Marshall believed in the power of architecture to affect people's lives. "He, like his inspiration Daniel Burnham, believed that architecture elevated society's ethics," says Didier Lepauw. "With a better environment, you could create a better society."

### Benjamin Marshall Society

The Benjamin Marshall Society was founded in 2002 by Jane and Didier Lepauw. "Marshall was a very significant architect for Chicago, but few people know his name," says Jane Lepauw. "Our mission is to make his name, life, works and legacy known and to revive his dialogue on the role of architecture in a civic society and in society as a whole."

Although focused on Marshall's architecture, the Society also celebrates his personal style, and his devotion to art in all its forms. The Society offers power point presentations and lectures about Marshall's life and works, as well as "Beautiful Pieces in Beautiful Places", a concert series of classical and jazz music in classical buildings and halls of the Chicago area.

### Benjamin Marshall Prize

The Benjamin Marshall Prize, beginning this year, is to be awarded annually by the Benjamin Marshall Society to recognize individuals who, through architecture, urban and landscape planning, or cultural accomplishments, enrich the life experience of people in the higher pursuit of contributing to the advancement of civilization.

### After School Matters Gallery 37

A portion of the proceeds will go to funding the cataloguing of Benjamin Marshall's archives stored at the University of Texas at Austin, and to gallery37 programs offered at After School Matters, a non-profit where Chicago teens are exposed to a wide variety of disciplines. Specifically, gallery37 programs expose teens to art disciplines such as dance, theater, music, and culinary art. In each program, the teens are apprenticed to professional artists, actors, dancers, musicians and chefs who teach teens new skills and expose them to rewarding career paths.

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