

Bed and Breakfast Offers "Turn-of-the-Century Charm"

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MERCER — A billboard along I-80 beckons travelers to stay at The Magoffin Guest House Bed and Breakfast as they pass through Mercer county. This uncharacteristic method of advertising may disturb some bed and breakfast purists and cause them to wonder if this grand scale of advertising could be for an authentic bed and breakfast establishment. But rest assured, The Magoffin Guest House Bed and Breakfast is indeed authentic albeit unique.

The Magoffin Guest House was originally built by Doctor Magoffin and was occupied by his family for over half a century. Janet and Rodney McClelland fell in love with this large Queen Ann Victorian house when they first saw it in 1983. At that time, it had been subdivided into apartments. But the McClelland's are people of vision. In 1985, they looked at it again with an eye to turning it into a bed and breakfast establishment. They bought it in July of that year and The Magoffin Guest House opened for Thanksgiving to a full house.

But between July and November, much had to be accomplished. Prior to the purchase, Janet and Rod had done a lot of reading about bed and breakfast businesses and made a family trip to Florida, staying in bed and breakfasts along the way. They purposely took their children along to see how feasible it was for whole families to stay in bed and breakfast houses.

The trip taught them a lot and excited them about the possibilities that lay dormant in the Victor-

ian brick house in Mercer. When the McClellands returned, they consulted with contractor Don Blank about the physical reconstruction needed to convert the house from apartments to separate rooms. Blank became so excited about the project that he became a third owner. Enthusiastically they scraped off paint to restore the house's original brass fixtures and preserve the original shutters and woodwork.

The unique idea to furnish the rooms with antiques that belonged to other people came from the reading the McClellands had done. They further researched the idea by visiting this kind of a bed and breakfast during their Florida excursion.

But using their antiques and furnishings was not an easy concept to sell to local antique dealers. The convincing factor was that it does provide a nice showroom to display large items like beds and dressers that do not show up well in crowded antique shops. The McClellands now have five dealers and collectors represented with furnishings that are for sale. Small notebooks in each room contain information about and the prices of the antiques used. A similar notebook is in the parlor for the furniture in the common use areas. Also in the parlor is an album featuring the antiques in the bedrooms. Interested buyers can then arrange a closer look when the rooms are unoccupied.

In addition, Janet operates a "Spare Room Gift Shop" with antiques and samplings from points of local interest. The shop displays the work of local craft persons, including that of the Old

Order Amish who live nearby. Unlike many bed and breakfast operators, the McClellands do not live on the premises. They originally gave this some consideration, but decided that the needs of their young family might conflict with those of their guests. They do, however, live nearby which makes it possible for Janet to be on hand in the evenings to welcome guests as they arrive, leave an evening snack and then be back bright and early, from 7-9 a.m., to serve breakfast.

The Magoffin Guest House also serves lunch on Monday - Saturday from 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. and dinner parties for 10-24 by reservation. However, this is operated as a separate business by Janet's sister-in-law Jacque McClelland who leases the Magoffin Guest House facilities and has her own staff of five. Jacque's luncheon menu includes a hot entree of the day, two homemade soups, home baked breads and pies and Banbury Tart, golden raisins and walnuts in a rich pastry crust. An unusual offering is The Magoffin Salad where the diner is given a list of ingredients to select from. The choice of the type of greens, three vegetables and two proteins from those listed provides the opportunity to create hearty salad combinations to suit individual tastes.

The two businesses have meshed together nicely. Janet doesn't have to be more busy and tied down than she desires and still The Magoffin Guest House can handle showers, rehearsal dinners, and weddings in the parlor with the reception following.

But even with Jacque handling the lunch and dinner trade, running a bed and breakfast establishment is not a 9-5 job. Janet is on hand from 7-9 to do breakfast. Then, after checkout at 11 a.m., she has a housekeeper come to help her get the rooms cleaned and ready for occupancy again.

The Magoffin Guest House has six bedrooms, all but two of these with private baths. Each bedroom can sleep two, with more sleeping accommodations possible by the addition of rollaways and porta cribs. One room even boasts an auxiliary Murphy Bed that can be dropped into place beside the double bed.

The bedroom on the downstairs level was once the doctor's office



Hostess Janet McClelland stands at the foot of the 21 step staircase.

and is decorated with antique medicine bottles and mortar and pestle. Although most of the decor of the house is Victorian, a suite in Amish style utilizes what were once the servants quarters. In these three rooms, the ceiling is lower and the trim plainer with a rear wall of exposed brick, stenciling on the painted walls and Amish style furniture.

Janet enjoys what she calls "the

special breed of people" who come to enjoy the house and the antiques. And it is her great delight to share the reactions of guests who see the house for the first time and try out the pump organ and the antique victrola and the stereo-scope that are available in the parlor for guests to use.

With a location central to Slippery Rock University and Thiel,

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Homestead Notes



The front porch and main entrance of The Magoffin Guest House.



A view of the cozy dining room of the Magoffin House. An oak Sessions Clock (\$150), a milk pitcher (\$25), and tea pot (\$20) adorn the mantle.



An authentic buggy seat (\$95) sits in front of a wall of exposed brick in the lower level of the Amish Suite.