

NEWS

Brampton Inn filled with stories and charm

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CHESTERTOWN — David Rinehart carries many titles at the Brampton Inn. He is an owner with his wife, Hilari. He is a handyman and carries baggage to the rooms when guests check in. But no title excites him more than historian and storyteller.

And on a property that dates to the 1700s, there are lots of stories to tell.

Standing in the home library, Rinehart points to dark spots on the original wood floors. In addition to being a library, the room was used to hang meat. When the fireplace is lit, the room has an aroma of barbecue.

The Rineharts bought the home 3½ years ago. The grounds span 35 acres, including a mile-long walking trail.

"It's a beautiful property," Rinehart said.

When a previous owner opened the home as a bed and breakfast in 1987, they featured three rooms.

The Rineharts have 13 rooms now, seven of them in cottages scattered around the property.

While David and Hilari are technically the Brampton Inn's owners, they think of themselves as caretakers, the current stewards of land that dates back centuries.

While the current home was built in 1860, Rinehart has traced activity on the land to 1760, when there was a mill and a fruit plantation at the site.

The original home was built in the 1820s and 1830s, but a fire destroyed it. Rinehart discovered the original foundation when he was excavating to build a patio.

The current home is termed Greek Revival style with an Italian ornate flavor.

Many of the fixtures — such as the shutters and window sashes — are original.

When he was restoring the shutters, Rinehart discovered slaves who had built them had carved their names in the bottom. One of the names carved on a shutter was Harry.

One day a family came to visit and told Rinehart about their ancestors who



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A horse-drawn carriage passes in front of the Brampton Inn during an open house event at the bed and breakfast.

worked on the plantation. They knew intricate details of the operations of the plantation.

"They were spot on," Rinehart said. "That's the closest I've come to having a direct connection."

The visitors had a name for one of their ancestors — Harry. Rinehart cut off the bottom of the shutter and gave it to the visitors, a keepsake from their family's past.

There have been many families who have come looking for ties to their past. Rinehart said the original owner was one of the largest slaveholders in the area, and he had a reputation for not treating his slaves well.

"He was not a nice person," Rinehart said.

Another story Rinehart tells is when a window sash broke and he needed to replace the window weights. When he took out the window, he discovered an 1860s business card with a Boston shopkeeper's name on it.

On a whim, he looked up the company. They were still in business.

Rinehart called, and the company still had parts from when the window was made.

"You guys bought them from us," the current owner said. The company was able to provide Rinehart with the brass window weights along with original glass

and another tie to the historical home's past.

Guests to the inn stroll the grounds and enjoy the stories Rinehart tells. Breakfasts are prepared by pastry and breakfast chef Carole Baxter.

The inn sits on Chestertown Road, about two miles from downtown Chestertown.

The Brampton Inn, with its peaceful pastoral setting and fine food, is the setting for many romantic retreats as well as weddings.

On a recent weekend, the inn held an open house to show off the bed and breakfast during the holiday season. Staff dressed in period costumes, the Chesterton River Singers provided music for guests seated on the patio and a horse-drawn carriage provided a tour of the grounds.

The treat came when dusk fell and the thousands of lights decorating the house were lit.

Throughout the year, there are special packages designed to celebrate life's special moments.

"More than ever do we need places of beauty, serenity and peace to escape to," Rinehart said. "The Brampton Inn has always been that magical oasis with beautiful gardens, porch swings and good food."

"There's always something going on at the Brampton," he said.



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Lights add to the charm of the Brampton Inn during the holidays.



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