



The restored B&B sits adjacent to the tracks in the small York County town of Railroad.

All Aboard for Engaging Hospitality

York County Bed & Breakfast sits along 43-mile rail trail

Text and photograph by Linda C. Feltman

SOMETIME IN THE LATE 1980s, THE town fathers of Railroad decided that the formerly renowned Jackson House Hotel had reached the end of its useful life. Despite the structure's historical value, they lamented that it had become an eyesore and attracted a disreputable element to their small village in southern York County.

When it was built in 1859, the hotel immediately became a popular stop for rail travelers, thanks to its innovative hot and cold running water and steam heat, a rarity for that era. But the hotel's heyday was long over, and the abandoned property had fallen into serious disrepair. In the end, the only thing that saved it from demolition was that the cost to demolish the three-story structure with 22-inch stone walls far exceeded what the little borough could afford.

Enter Kathy Lore, a local high school guidance counselor, who purchased the property in the early 1990s and creatively enlisted

the help of her school's vocational-technical program. Over the years, vo-tech students restored the hotel by adding new plumbing, a building-wide HVAC system and a bathroom for each guest room. The once-famous inn went from 13 tiny guest rooms in the main house to four with private baths. In 2000, she opened the property as a bed and breakfast.

Seven years later, Pam Nicholson and her husband, Bob Wilhelm, became the third caretakers and owners of this fascinating historic property.

Upon arriving at the inn, I asked Pam if I was the only guest for the evening since I didn't see any other vehicles in the parking lot.

"Not at all," she said, chuckling, "but you are the only one arriving by car."

The B&B is located along the Heritage Rail Trail, and guests often arrive on bicycles either heading north from Maryland or south from upper York County.

The next morning, I joined



York County

other guests for a delicious breakfast and some conversation with the innkeepers. Pam explained how she and Bob had traded high-stress jobs to become the proprietors of the Jackson House in 2007. Their backgrounds in finance, hospitality and food service and a family history of rehabbing homes in Baltimore made them well suited for the transition to an innkeeper's life.

Pam showed me the Jackson House guest register from about 1904 to 1920, and I wondered how something like that had survived over the years. She said it offered a treasure trove of information about long-ago travelers and provided fun speculation about their untold stories.

Before my departure, I walked across the rail tracks to check out a massive building that was formerly the borough's grist mill and is now an eclectic antique shop.

Back at the inn, the Steam into History #17 train, a replica of the Civil War steam locomotive that carried Abraham Lincoln to deliver his Gettysburg Address, rumbled by. On a whim I decided to take a ride. Less than two miles up the road, I parked my car, bought a ticket and boarded the train for a one-hour excursion that took me back past the Jackson House.

It was a fitting end to a fun-filled visit to this historic railroad-rich area of southern York County. ♣

—Linda C. Feltman has been visiting B&Bs and inns throughout Pennsylvania since 1991.

DETAILS

The Jackson House Bed and Breakfast, 6 E. Main St., Railroad, York County; 717-227-2022 or 1-877-STA-IN-PA (782-4672); innkeeper@jacksonhousebandb.com; www.jacksonhousebandb.com

Four guest areas are in the main house. Adjacent to the main house is a ground-level private cottage and a smaller guest room facing the trail; both have their own entrances. All guest rooms have private baths, central air conditioning, free Wi-Fi and cable TV. The private backyard features a large outdoor hot tub, gardens and a waterfall. A hearty, multicourse breakfast is served daily at 9 a.m. unless other arrangements are made in advance. Rates range from \$139 to \$189 a night depending upon room and season.

The inn is located along the Heritage Rail Trail, a 43-mile bike trail that runs from Ashland, Md., to York, Pa. Steam into History offers one-hour and 2.5-hour train excursions. All rides are round-trip and begin in New Freedom. york-countyparks.org, steamintohistory.com, yorkpa.org