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History Lesson Comes From Grant Street Inn

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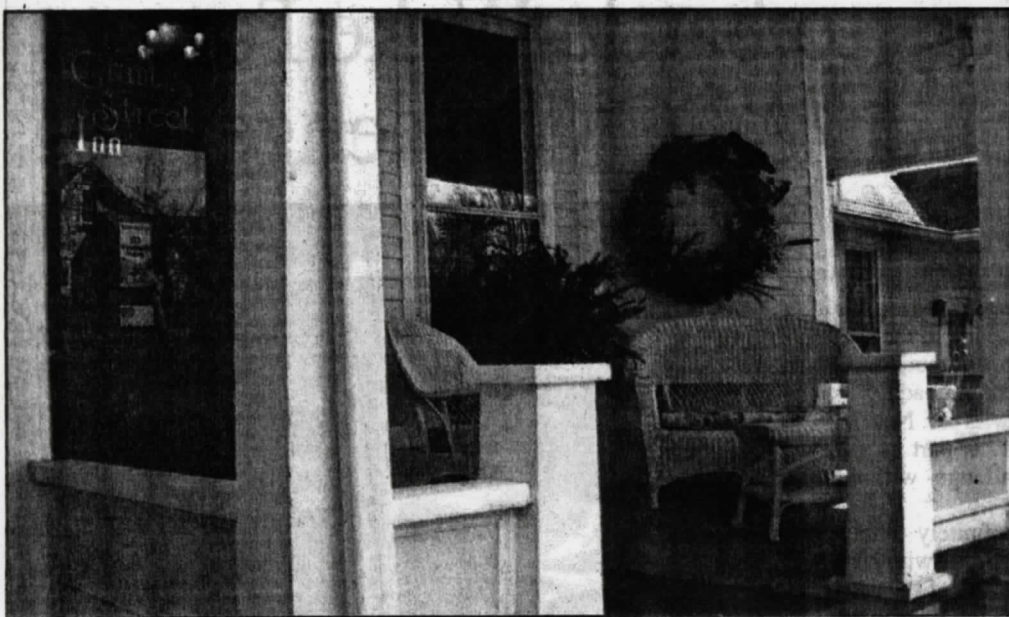
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Bloomington



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All is quiet outside the main entrance to Grant Street Inn at 7th and Grant Streets.

History lesson comes from Grant Street Inn

■ Landmark changed locations, but still offers taste of old Bloomington

By Lyndsey Williams
Indiana Daily Student

In a town that can never have too many hotel rooms, there is one bed and breakfast that prides itself on being a little different.

Tucked in at the corner of Seventh and Grant Streets, the Grant Street Inn almost blends in among the rest of the houses until you turn the corner and notice the three adjoining buildings, all in matching yellow.

"Sometimes you wake up in a motel, when you travel a lot, and you don't even know what city you're in," said Grant Street Inn manager Bob Bowler. "We're just a little different than some of the chains. (Business travelers) like it."

The inn holds a great deal more history than your typical hotel, serving as a private residence as well as student housing over the years. According to the Grant Street Inn's Web site, the structure is one of Bloomington's oldest buildings and was originally built in the 1890s by Williams P. Rogers, then dean of the IU law school, for his bride.

The building has since passed through the hands of William Graham, who built the Graham Hotel downtown, and William N. Howers, owner of Showers Brothers' Furniture Store, at one time the largest furniture manufacturing plant in the United States. The house was named the Ziegler house in 1944 when Charles and Martha Ziegler bought it from Florence Fulwider. In 1987, following Charles Ziegler's death, the

First Presbyterian Church assumed ownership.

As the church began to expand, its plans did not include a future for what is now the main house of the inn. Two hundred students who were living in the house, which had been split into apartments, signed a petition protesting the destruction of the house. An agreement was negotiated between the Church and one of Bloomington's largest property management groups, CFC, Inc., in which CFC purchased the house from the Church for \$1 and promised to relocate. The house, originally built at the corner of Seventh and Lincoln Streets, was moved two blocks to its current location in 1990.

"We're just a little different than some of the chains. (Business travelers) like it."

Bob Bowler
Grant Street Inn
Manager

According to a spring 1990 issue of Bloomington Restoration Inc.'s newsletter, finding an owner for the house proved to be a difficult task because of the stipulation that it needed to be moved. After much planning, negotiating, and a few initial delays, CFC moved all 60 tons of the 40-foot high, 107-year-old house.

For the move, two blocks were closed to traffic, many trees were trimmed back as much as the city would allow or were temporarily uprooted altogether and the police and the fire departments were notified. The Pritchett Brothers Construction Company had to deconstruct two additions to the house piece by piece to prepare the house for the move.

Finally, on March 19, 1990 the inn was at its final destination and concrete basement walls had to be laid from the foundation up to meet the house. The cost of moving the house amounted to nearly \$25,000.

GRANT: Inn now sits in 'Old Library District'

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Today, the Inn is located in The Old Library District, named for the original Monroe Carnegie Library, which is now the Monroe County Historical society. The area, which was originally inhabited by various types of professionals, contains several historic buildings dating between the late 19th century and the early 20th century, according to information provided by the Bloomington Housing and Development commission.

The age and historical significance of the house led CFC to turn it into an inn, which opened in 1991.

Since becoming a bed and breakfast, two neighboring buildings have been converted, as well as an addition built to join the Ziegler house with the Gilstrap house, equaling a total of 24 rooms.

With candy dishes throughout the house, creaking floor boards and lots of plants, the inn more closely resembles Grandma's house than a hotel. Tall ceilings and four-post beds make the rooms look and feel like real bedrooms. Each room is unique with

décor ranging from pink and floral, to blue and white Swedish-looking prints, to a patriotic hound-hunting theme. The general areas of the inn contain antique-style furniture, rugs, lamps and soft classical music contributing to its Victorian theme.

Bowler said as much original trim and flooring was saved as possible. A few of the rooms even use the original pocket doors as giant wall mountings behind the beds.

Nearly 50 percent of the people who stay at the inn come to Bloomington on business, and the other half for leisure such as parents and students on holidays, Bowler said. Famous guests in the past have included U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg along with her entourage of U.S. Marshals and bodyguards while visiting the IU School of Law. The Counting Crows also stayed there last year during a concert stop at IU.

"(My favorite part of working here) is meeting all of the different people who come," Sue Cowling, a desk clerk at the inn, said. "(I like) getting to know parents over the course of four years."

— Contact staff writer Lyndsey Williams at lyjwilli@indiana.edu.