

A lovely New Concord inn

Thanks to Nancy Vazac Jackson, a former “publick house,” stop on the Underground Railroad, weigh station and a stagecoach stop in the 1800s is going to be an inn on the green in the beautiful, nearby hamlet of New Concord. The architectural rehabilitation and additions were done by Jackson’s brother Rusty Vazac.

By Jacqueline LaChance



The house at the turn of the century with Victorian decoration on the porch.

Nancy Vazac Jackson, inn owner.



Nancy Vazac Jackson used to ride her bike by the big white Colonial that sprawled on property in between New Concord and Elliott roads in the picturesque hamlet of New Concord, admiring the house as a child. A lifetime later, she is poised to move in and open the historic house to the public as an inn. After nearly three years of “rehabilitation” by her brother and contractor Rusty Vazac, the New Concord Bed and Breakfast is slated to open this winter.

A new career

Jackson, who recently left a longtime career as a nursing professor, has moved back to the area after living and teaching in New York City for the past 45 years. “I wasn’t ready to retire,” she said of her decision to change careers, pointing out that there is a scarcity of lodging in the area. “The house just suggests bed and breakfast and I think it’s cool to share such a historic community.” She is living in her childhood home right up the road from the soon-to-open inn on County Route 9, caring for her mother and splitting her time between the two houses. Disenchanted with changes in higher education which she said has become more and more “big business,” Jackson said she decided it was time to try something new – being an innkeeper. “I decided it made sense for me to run my own business where I can be in charge and make decisions that make sense to me,” she said.

The family bought the house in 2007 from the estate of its longtime owner, Dorothy O’Hare, a schoolteacher in Queens who summered at the house for more than 60 years. The open house alone drew more than 300 people, mainly out of curiosity, said Jackson with a laugh. “No one wanted it because there was so much work to do,” she said of the historic house, which had fallen into disrepair. The O’Hare family bought the house for \$2,000 in 1939 at auction on the steps of the Tracy Memorial in the Village of Chatham, the only bidders for the house and 17.5 acres of land, according to Vazac.

Former publick house

A former “publick house,” it was a weigh station and a stagecoach stop in the 1800s. The house was built in sections with the oldest being constructed in the 1780s and added to in the 1820s. The wide, hard pine floors have all been power washed and refinished, chestnut beams can be spotted in a front room and many of the original windows have been taken apart, restored and put back in the frames. An upstairs closet with a secret compartment was used to hide slaves as the house was part of the Underground Railroad, according to Jackson. As part of the massive undertaking, Vazac had the foundation raised 36 inches and a fully insulated basement was dug, replacing portions that were just dirt. An older back section of the house was removed and rebuilt in 2014 to match the Colonial style of the future inn. Jackson will have her own living quarters in this section of the house and use the other four bedrooms – all with private baths – for her guests. A downstairs bedroom and bath is handicapped accessible. Jackson said her brother’s attention to detail in rehabilitating



The historic house sits near the lovely intersection of north, south, east and west back roads in New Concord.



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the house has been a fascinating part of the project. "His expertise in architectural design is amazing," she said. "He knows exactly what goes with each era."

Janice Patterson of Circa Decorating in Chatham has helped Jackson with the interior design, picking paint colors and fixtures that match the style of the house. The bathtubs and sinks are all original vintage and have been located through sources such as the Habitat for Humanity ReStore in Pittsfield and Craigslist. Jackson points to a beautiful cast iron bathtub that she drove out to Cleveland, Ohio to purchase for \$300, renting a van to rescue the piece. She had found a similar tub in New York, but the \$10,000 price tag made the road trip well worth it. Jackson is furnishing the inn with pieces she has been buying at auctions and estate sales, keeping it in storage until the interior work is complete. The inn will boast some luxurious and unusual details, according to Jackson. Radiant heat will warm the inn's floors. Decorative murals that were made by Dorothy O'Hare's father – an artist who painted scenery for the Metropolitan Opera – are being restored.

Jackson said the neighbors have been very supportive and interested in the transformation of the house, which sits in the center of the quaint hamlet. Fittingly, the house is directly across the road from the square, where a Society of New Concord plaque for Jackson and Vazac's father, Al Vazac, marks a tree in his memory. So, as the girl who used to ride her bike by her favorite house all those years ago gets ready to move in, she has literally come full circle. ☺

