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FOR THE LOVE OF PRESERVATION

Berry Manor Inn restored from a three-bath home to a premier inn in 90-contractor days

Rockland, ME – Ask Cheryl Michaelsen what she knew about plumbing before she became an innkeeper, and her answer would be one word – “nada!” Today, she and husband Mike LaPosta, owners of the Berry Manor Inn, could be considered experts in not only plumbing but wiring, plastering, painting, decorating, and in short – historic preservation. It’s fair to say that just about every inch of the 1898 mansion, listed on the National Registry of Historic Places in 1986 as part of Rockland’s Historic District, was renovated and restored to its original opulence when it became the Berry Manor Inn; just as befitting for today’s premier guests as it was for one of Rockland’s turn-of-the-century leaders. All 6800 square feet - including twenty-four rooms, sixty-six windows and eleven dormers - has been lovingly scraped, painted, re-wired, re-plumbed, and papered to create a premier inn from a 107-year-old home that has always commanded attention. Amazingly enough, the restoration was not only completed per the standards of the Department of the Interior to maintain its place in the National Registry of Historic Places, it all happened in just 90 contractor days!

Built in 1898 for Rockland business mogul Charles H. Berry as a wedding present for his wife, the home that is now Berry Manor Inn remains one of the largest and most stately homes in the City of Rockland. It has remained the center of grand and gracious hospitality for more than a century, first for four generations of the Berry family and now as the Midcoast’s only AAA-rated four-diamond historic inn. The house is an eclectic display of architectural styles. It combines the symmetry of Colonial Revival with the rounded façade of Queen Anne Style, along with a healthy dose of Victorian fancy throughout. Charles Berry ran a livery with his uncles, and the former six-stall carriage house has been converted to premium guest rooms, keeping the décor and feel that equestrians would appreciate.

The Berry home, located in one of Rockland’s prestigious neighborhoods away from the fish processing and working waterfront of 1800’s Rockland, was in keeping with the family’s stature. Clearly, built for entertaining and impressing clients, the original home features formal parlors with marble fireplaces, and carved woodworking - still evident today. It’s hard to imagine this rambling mansion was home to a family with just one child. However, where servants and nannies once slept, guests now enjoy plush accommodations in twelve guest rooms. Remarkably, the original home housed only three bathrooms where today after extensive remodeling each of the twelve guest rooms features its own private bath – many with double whirlpool tubs and multi-jetted showers.

Opened as the Berry Manor Inn the third week in June, 1999, the restoration of this historic mansion is nothing short of a miracle. After purchasing the home in the winter of 1999, LaPosta maintained his sales job, while his parents and wife moved in to undertake the transformation from home to inn. In just 90 days, with the help of contractors, every room was re-wired, re-plumbed, and totally re-wallpapered. Extensive insulation, a new heating system with thirteen zones and a fire-alarm and suppression system was added. Great care was taken to preserve original features, including building a cage around one of the chandeliers so re-plastering would not damage it. Throughout the inn, vestiges of history are captured behind Plexiglas, allowing guests to see the original plumbing or the handwritten initials of the master wallpaper hanger who originally covered the walls. Taking great care to research the history of the home, Cheryl Michaelsen and Mike LaPosta will gladly regale stories of both the legacy and the renovation of the inn.

Never envisioning themselves as innkeepers in the years before purchasing the Berry Manor Inn, Michaelsen and LaPosta have created the ideal choice for those who think they don't like bed and breakfasts, offering plenty of privacy, and luxury, accentuated with a bit of whimsy. Mike will be the first to say he doesn't like to talk to anyone in the morning, unless you ask him about his toy hamster collection, with a different variety of these entertaining toys offered for just about any occasion a guest might be celebrating. And after toiling through the renovation, LaPosta's parents along with Michaelsen's mother are still involved in the management of the inn, helping with everything from laundry to entertaining birdcalls at breakfast to daily pie-making for guests.

To learn more about Berry Manor Inn, visit www.berrymanorinn.com where you can tour guest and common rooms and book online. To make a reservation by phone, simply call 800.774.5692.

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