

Three years in the waking, dream finds home here



"All the pieces seem to fall together here at the Grey Swan Inn." -Barbara Frazer

Two months ago, Barbara Frazer was conducting her life in northern New Jersey as usual, not realizing that in a few weeks she would be yanking herself up by the roots and planting herself in Blackstone.

Everything was well-placed in her life. Her work as office manager for an oil company was secure, and she loved the challenge. To satisfy a love for fine furnishing, she was a partner in an Antiques Shop.

But there was one problem: a life-long dream of owning a Bed & Breakfast Inn just wouldn't let her rest. And the older she got, the more urgent it became.

Three years ago, she began to look for the inn she envisioned. First she went to Charleston—but inns there were too expensive. The next year, North Carolina showed her nothing Richmond was the same. In March, she tried Petersburg. Maybe that large Victorian house that appeared in her ream would be there.

When her realtor called about this possibility in Blackstone, it was a little further from the city than she had wanted, but she would look anyway.

"When I pulled up, I knew this was the house I had dreamed about," said Ms. Frazer, who was now well into her first moth as the owner of the Grey Swan on South Main Street. And Blackstone was her new home. "It had everything I was looking for."

With no experience running an inn—except for a three-day seminar—Ms. Frazer was already serving guests: “I moved in one Monday, my furniture arrived on Tuesday, and on Friday I had four bookings.” The Walshes, the couple she bought the inn from, had done the booking for her.

Oh, yes, she did have some more training as an innkeeper. She stayed with the Walshes for three days and studied everything they did. “I just have 12 pages of notes because I asked them everything.”

Seated in her spacious living room, this tall New Jersey woman brought an elegance to the inn that seemed a perfect fit—like a fine piece of furniture that looks like it was made for a room.

“Being from the north, I have found people here exceptionally pleasant. I have had so many people knocking on my door to welcome me here. You certainly don’t find that in the north,” she said.

Ms. Frazer hasn’t had time yet to pinch herself, as if she might wake up from this dream that has brought her to this small town and an inn called the Grey Swan. Like a migratory bird, she finds herself in a new lake, and having tested the food supply, think she will stay.

“I had always wanted an old Victorian home. It was something I could do in my later years. I could meet people. It would be my home and a source of income, and I could keep my antiques around. This just came around sooner than I expected, but when it did, I just gave up my job and moved. I had to take advantage of the opportunity when it was here.”

And that’s the way dreams change things, if we let them. When the time’s is right, the fragments of one’s life just fall together. “All the pieces seem to fall together here at the Grew Swan Inn,” said Ms. Frazer. All of her past experience would have a room here.

Even the name was just what she would have chosen. (July 1, 1993)