

Something old, something new at The Garden Inn

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The Garden Inn is a registered Heritage home built in 1875 by the late Nova Scotia Supreme Court Judge William Lorrimer Hall.

You've probably noticed it. It's a pink Victorian with holiday lights outlining its edges on South Park Street in Halifax across from the Victoria General Hospital and right down the street from Canada's only surviving authentic Victorian park, the Public Gardens.

The Inn tastefully combines modern conveniences like an electronic key system, telephones and modem data ports in each room with turn-of-the-century charm.

Much of the furniture is from Judge Hall's time. There's a small mahogany organ in the hall made in 1867 by D.W. Karen and Co. A large French armoire graces the dining room, where tea, scones and tarts are laid out for the guests.

When Gloria Hussain heard about the house being up for sale from an acquaintance at the Grammar School where her children attended in 1995, she said "Oh sure, I'll go and see it. So, I came in and I said 'oh my God, that's awful, terrible looking and the wallpaper had been there for, I think,

50 years. Never been removed, it had changed colour to mustard."

She bought it anyway, because as she told her husband, "Well, I think we can't go wrong; we don't use this as a B&B, then we can use it as a home and an office."

Mrs. Hussain is a registered nurse by trade and has degrees in Nursing and Health Care Administration and is the CEO for Gem Health Care Group, which has numerous nursing homes and assisted care facilities in Halifax, Truro and Amherst.

Mrs. Hussain had to go through some hoops with the zoning office, but after two years, she completely renovated and expanded the building to 23 units and opened for business in October 1997.

In 1998, Mrs. Hussain hired Marie Lillard as the innkeeper/manager. After her husband passed away, Mrs. Lillard went to college to study tourism and then ran Marie's B&B in Newfoundland for a year before

coming to work at the Garden Inn to be closer to her children.

Being across from the VG, they often host doctors and professors. Mrs. Lillard tells of one guest she particularly remembers, "we had a doctor of oncology come here to stay. He came for two nights and he was here for 22 months."

Last September, they hosted their first wedding, a couple from Newfoundland.

"They booked the whole hotel, so it's like their home. They're going from one room to the other room to the other room, and everybody can help themselves."

They've already got another wedding booked for next July — "friends of friends" of the Newfoundland couple.

The honeymoon suite combines the old and new with a beautiful bay window and a heart-shaped Jacuzzi and Queen-sized bed.