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About STANLY the magazine

*STANLY the magazine is a product of
The Stanly News & Press, the community
newspaper for Stanly County, North Carolina.
Call 704-982-2121 for subscription information.*

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The Gem Master



Gene Starnes recalls how his grandfather found a horseshoe upon arriving in Albemarle more than 120 years ago. The lucky horseshoe now hangs proudly in Starnes Jewelers.

Starnes reflects on a life full of sparkling moments

BY CHRIS MILLER

When Gene Starnes arrived at Lenoir-Rhyne University in Hickory in the early 1960s, he didn't necessarily have a detailed plan for what he wanted to do with his life.

He briefly considered a career in

marine biology or some similar field, since he always had a love for animals and plants.

Whatever path he chose, Starnes assumed he'd do it some place away from his hometown of Albemarle. While he didn't count out eventually

moving back to the city, he planned to take time after graduation to explore and travel to other parts of the country. He even noted that during high school, his classmates probably thought he was least likely among them to remain in the city.

But life can be funny sometimes. While in college, he developed a love for salesmanship and came to the realization that the best place to apply his degree in business and economics was none other than his family's jewelry business in downtown Albemarle.

As someone with a lust for travel and adventure, Starnes ultimately enjoyed all that and more during his time with Starnes Jewelers.

"I came back and never left," said Starnes, now 79.

Even as he's dealt with several health issues in recent years, Starnes still comes to work each day, excited to reminisce and interact with lifelong customers who have since become good friends.

That's not a surprise since, according to Pat Bramlett, his sister, he's always been a people-person.

"He is always out doing things with people," she said. "That's one of the reasons he's stayed at Starnes Jewelers" over the years. "He just loves people."

'I grew up in the store'

Born in 1941, just a few blocks from downtown, he was the third generation of Starnes men bearing the name Francis Eugene.

By all accounts, he had an idyllic childhood, growing up in a small, close-knit community. He enjoyed playing with friends in the neighborhood and watching movies (especially ones featuring cowboys, circuses and Disney) with freshly made popcorn in the basement of his house on a 16 millimeter projector on Saturday nights.

The Starnes house was the popular gathering place for young people, as he and his siblings, Pat and younger sister Judy, hosted many parties over the years.

"It was a wonderful place to grow up," he said.

Even at early age, he spent much of his time working at the family business.

"I grew up in the store," he said. "As long as I was big enough to unpack something or pick up a broom or wipe a case."

Originally founded by his grandfather F.E. Starnes in 1898, Starnes Jewelers is

the oldest continually-run family retail business in the county.

His grandfather, who was an optometrist and an apprentice to a jeweler in Monroe, set out on his bike to find a location to open his own jewelry store. According to family lore, F.E. fell off his bike in Albemarle. As he got up, he discovered a horseshoe beside the road, which he took for a sign that Albemarle was the right location.

"He picked up that horseshoe and brought it with him for good luck," Starnes said about his grandfather. The horseshoe is framed and hanging inside the store.

F.E. Starnes moved locations several times over the years before settling on its current spot on Main Street in 1907. He also opened several other stores across the state in Concord, Salisbury, Lexington, Southern Pines and Badin (though most of these were not around when Gene Starnes was growing up). Because of his increasing influence, he noted his grandfather be-

came well-known across much of North Carolina in the early 20th century.

Starnes cultivated a deep knowledge of jewelry due to his time at the shop and accompanying his parents to numerous jewelry shows and conferences across much of the country, including New York City and Atlanta, where his parents would buy precious stones.

These national events were how Starnes and his family were able to network and establish close ties with other jewelers across the country. The business has been a member of the American Gem Society for close to 80 years, he said. The store has also been a member of many other gemological and retail organizations over the years.

Following his time at Lenoir-Rhyne, Starnes returned to the business in 1964. Even during his six-year stint with the Air National Guard in Badin, Starnes still found time to work nights and on the weekends.

"Any time I wasn't at the

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Guard, I was working here,” he said.

His father started turning over key responsibilities to Starnes after he finished college, as a way to groom him to eventually take over the store once he retired. Around this time, Starnes also began buying shares of the business.

He took over the store after his father died in 1976. Starnes has now owned the store for about 45 years, longer than any other family member.

Traveling the world

One of the more exciting parts about the business for Starnes has been the frequent travel.

Utilizing the store’s deep connections with jewelers

across the world and its membership with numerous gemological associations, Starnes has been to more countries than he can count. He’s traveled across Europe, Africa (he once went on a safari with other jewelers), the Middle East, Australia, China and Antarctica. He’s visited gold, diamond, opal and sapphire mines during his trips abroad.

“We were buying stones in all these places and got connections, some of which we still have,” he said, noting he continued to travel up until a few years ago when health issues forced him to stop. Once he identified stones for the shop, they were then mailed to

Albemarle.

Many of his exploits seem more fitting of a certain 007 British agent than a small-town jeweler from Albemarle.

On one trip to South Africa, Starnes climbed on his hands and knees with a flashlight attached to his helmet through numerous caves and tunnels, some 5,000 feet below the ground, after part of the diamond mine had recently collapsed. Once he left the site, the diamond company used him to inconspicuously transport millions of dollars of diamonds in a nondescript paper bag through the streets of Johannesburg to the local post office.

“Some of the men from the company were afraid they would be recognized and knew I wouldn’t,” he said, adding that the whole experience “was exciting.”

He also remembers climbing down into black opal mines on rickety ladders held together by coat hangers while in Lightning Ridge, a small outback town in Australia.

Starnes was part of a group that was one of the first in China to purchase non-government sanctioned pearls. He was also among the first groups to tour Russia after it reopened following the end of the Cold War.

Though most trips tended to last only about a day, Starnes does remember cer-



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Chris Bramlett, left, shown here examining an item with Gene, is more than his colleague, he's also his brother-in-law.

tain excursions, like when he purchased diamonds in Antwerp, a port city in Belgium, that lasted at least a week.

His sister Pat acknowledged that Starnes and their sister Judy both had a love for traveling to far-flung places that were often overlooked by others.

"You could think of a place that you'd say, 'Well why would you go there?' and they'd like to go," she said.

Starnes, for example, has traveled to Iraq and Iran, and has seen the crown jewels of not just those countries, but most others that have a current or former monarchy.

He acknowledged most typical jewelry stores don't have employees traveling the world hand-picking stones because most don't have the deep connections with diamond companies and organizations like the AGS that Starnes Jewelers

has fostered over its many decades.

For a sociable person like Starnes who's never met a stranger, Pat said, meeting new people around the world was similar to meeting new customers at the store.

As valuable as these trips were from a business standpoint, they helped reveal to Starnes the common humanity that exists among all people.

"You get a greater appre-

ciation of people and, even if you can't speak the same language, how much we all have in common," he said. "It just broadens your outlook on life and on people."

Working with his brother-in-law

Since 1981, when Pat moved back to Albemarle, Starnes has worked alongside his brother-in-law, Chris Bramlett, a certified gemologist appraiser. The only time they've been apart was a 15-year stint in

the 1990s and early 2000s when Bramlett left the business to establish his own jewelry store in downtown Concord.

Having previously held faculty positions at both the University of Alabama and East Tennessee State University, Bramlett, who received a bachelor's, master's and Ph.D. in chemistry, took several gemological courses once he and Pat made the decision to relocate to Albemarle.

"I knew obviously I wanted to apply the science to jewelry," Bramlett said.

In March 2001, Bramlett received the Robert M. Shipley Award, which is conferred annually by the Gemological Society of America upon a member "for outstanding service to the society." Bramlett said he's the only gemologist in the state to have received it.

Even though Bramlett's position as an appraiser differs from Starnes' role as a jeweler, both said they still have to take yearly exams to maintain their titles.

"Not many businesses you have to do that in," Starnes said.

Though he has no kids of his own (he was briefly married for a short time), he's a surrogate father to Bramlett's three children.

"I love them as if they were my own," he said.

In addition to his work as a jeweler, Starnes has also been active in his local community.

He is a member of the



Gene always loved the thrill of the hunt for gems, like on this trip to Africa.

Albemarle Rotary Club, was a member of the Historical Restructuring Committee and has been involved with the Stanly County Museum.

"We believe very strongly in giving back to the community," Starnes said.

Unlike his brother-in-law though, who served for many years on the city council, Starnes has never been interested in getting involved in politics.

"I think his personal generosity has been important to many causes and institutions throughout the county," Bramlett said.

"He's been a good brother-in-law," he added.

'Stable factor in the community'

As Albemarle continues to grow and evolve, Starnes' steady presence in the shop is no doubt a source of comfort for many in the city as a sign that some things have remained the same.

"As so much business has left the downtown, he has

sort of been the thing that's held the downtown together in a way," Pat said. "He's been a stable factor in the community."

He recently sold an engagement ring to a young

man who was the fifth generation in his family to buy rings from the store.

"There's not many stores that can say that," he said.

Starnes has no plans to retire anytime soon. He just wants to keep serving his community as long as he can. Starnes and Bramlett have indicated though that the store will close once they are no longer around.

For the man who grew up imagining a life beyond his hometown, Starnes is content right where he is.

"I could be happy many places but no happier than I would be right here in Albemarle," he said.

"Home is here."

* * *

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The 108-year-old Badin Inn was recently renovated by the mother-daughter duo of Vanessa Mullinix and Jennifer Owens.

Badin Inn finds renewed life as hotel, vacation destination

By **CHARLES CURCIO**

Like any good dramatic story in which a protagonist rises and falls with the times, so has one of the oldest establishments nestled into a northeastern corner of Stanly.

With roots going back to the early 20th century, The Badin Inn has survived through wars and business struggles but has new life and purpose while still maintaining many of its rich traditions.

History

The Badin Inn first started

in 1913 when a French aluminum company, L'Aluminium Franciase, built a club and guest house for its employees, which was later sold to ALCOA at the beginning of World War I. The building was completed a year later.

ALCOA added rooms for teachers at the local school which could be rented for \$34 per month with three meals a day included but no air conditioning.

Many of the rooms inside the Badin Inn to this day harken back to the vaude-

ville days when the Badin Opera House, built in 1918, garnered stars such as W.C. Fields and Mae West, of which the suite named for

her can be rented.

As a golf course, the first club was organized in the summer of 1924 with land donated by ALCOA. A total

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This room is named for Mae West, who performed at the Badin Opera House during the early 1900s.

of 15 golfers soon grew to 21 as the course went from three holes to four. The next year, at a cost of \$426, the course grew to nine holes and had its first real tournament on Thanksgiving Day. By 1926, the club had its first meeting and eventually became the Stanly County Country Club.

Tragedy struck the club eight years later when a fire in December 1934 damaged the clubhouse. From that point, the clubhouse was used mainly as a caddy house in the basement.

Many golf professionals have worked at the country club, including pro tour golfer Johnny Palmer, who won eight times on the

PGA Tour and competed at the Masters Tournament in Augusta. Future jazz saxophonist Lou Donaldson worked as a caddy growing up in Badin, sometimes caddying for Palmer.

The Inn would be remodeled to add a pro shop and snack bar, the latter of which grew into the Johnny Palmer Grill which operated for many years.

Tough Times

As the golf industry suffered setbacks, the country club and Inn fell upon some tough times.

Stanly County Country Club had stable membership in the 1980s and 1990s offering private memberships for the golf course,

pool and tennis courts, hosting events in the ball room for members and non-members.

Eventually, the country club stopped its operations in the late 1990s to early 2000s and the Inn itself did not function as a hotel until the mid-2000s.

Golfers could still play the

course a few years later, but a shutdown of the course was in its future.

Badin Inn closed as a golf course for the first time in August 2017 when the Stanly News & Press reported the course had been closed with a sign in the window and no notifications to the club's members.

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New owners changed the name to the Historic Badin Golf Resort and Inn the next year, but also were gone approximately two months later. Bankruptcy reverted the company back to its original owners.

The course, which had not been maintained well, was then sold to Newport Landowners Services. The company, based in Richfield and New London, mostly dealt with timberland but with Badin Inn marketed the property to find new ownership.

However, the property's life as a traditional golf course was over.

Rebirth

Looking for stable ownership of Badin Inn, two local women decided they wanted to help preserve history while also starting their own business.

Vanessa Mullinix, and her daughter, Jennifer Owens, became interested in Badin Inn while as residents watching the property "deteriorate before our very eyes."

Owens said many of her memories, along with many others in the community, were of having special events at the Badin Inn. From high school proms and weddings to holiday office dinners and other private events, Badin Inn had "positive memories" for so many.

Beyond memories, though, was a chance for Owens and her mother to work together

to build a business, with both having an interest in event planning.

"We could bring a life back into this building that had been forgotten," Owens said of her family's interest.

The family bought the three buildings of the Badin Inn and have leased much of the former golf course area near the buildings.

"We wanted to revitalize a piece of Badin and Stanly County history, but (it was also) an opportunity for a mother and daughter to work together and build a business," Owens said.

Owens spent many years in the corporate world working for Fiberon. She said she was grateful for all of her years working there, but she wanted to work somewhere to build a legacy for herself and her family.

Redoing the inside was not as bad, Owens said, as getting the outside of the property ready, painting all the columns adorning the porches of the Inn and some structural repairs to the rooms.

"We always saw the diamond in the rough," Owens said, noting the building's construction in 1913 was "better quality construction than what you would get today in certain cases. "There were definitely moments where it all seemed daunting. It's such a big place."

However, the family's motto has been to fix the

place up one problem at a time.

"Our motto has been, 'Every day we chip away,'" Owens said. "We never felt like it wasn't doable. It's just hard work, and we're not scared of hard work."

The new 1913 Badin Inn was able to host some events such as a jazz ensemble before the COVID-19 pandemic forced the shutdown of indoor events in the spring of 2020.

"We're not doing great because we can't have our big events," Mullinix said, "but we still have our nose above water. (Operating as a hotel) has been what has been keeping us above water."

Another struggle for the family has been to keep the restaurant open, both because of the pandemic and trying to keep the space leased. However, Owens said the long-term goal for the restaurant is to be open for three meals a day, seven days a week.

The Future

Ecotourism has always

been a focus for the new owners, but with the world slowly reopening due to the pandemic, 1913 Badin Inn will be a place for people to get away for the weekend.

Bookings are available on many major sites including booking.com, AirBnB and Vrbo.

"People are trying to get out of the cities, to a quieter, more secluded experience," Owens said. "We have very clean, spacious rooms. We have walking trails in the back that people can enjoy."

With the inn located less than 10 minutes away from Morrow Mountain State Park, inn guests are close to canoeing, kayaking, hiking and more activities, once they are open fully. Guests may also be able to enjoy vineyard tours set up by the Inn, Owens said.

"When people are looking for a getaway, they are always impressed to find this little treasure tucked back in the village of Badin."

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The shavings fly in Jerry Measimer's workshop in Richfield. He took up woodturning in 2007.

Hats off to the woodturner

BY CHRIS MILLER

Sometimes life can be ironic.

Jerry Measimer, who lives in Richfield but grew up in Cabarrus County, took a shop class in eighth grade, where he learned to turn wood into pieces of art — in this case a lamp and a baseball bat. While he was interested in woodworking in general, he didn't take to the specific craft of woodturning and found it dull.

"I said this is stupid," he

recalled. "I didn't like it because I didn't understand it and I didn't know how the tools work."

Fast forward to 2007, when Measimer picked up a woodturning book featuring hollow, ornamental Christmas balls on the cover. The balls each had a tiny hole 16th of an inch thick.

Measimer was in disbelief with the intricacy of the ornaments — and it piqued his interest.

"There's no way anybody could do that," he said. "It was just a beautiful, clean piece of wood."

He bought the book and met the author. He took classes from expert woodturners, soaking up as much as he could about the intricate craft.

"It just snowballed," he said. "That got me hooked."

Though the former Marine has a full-time job working for Culp Lumber

Company, he spends time each day in his workshop behind his house — called Shop II Woodworks Studio — turning big chunks of wood on a lathe into intricate, and often colorful, bowls, urns, frames, hummingbird houses and cowboy hats. The workshop is often filled with mounds of wood shavings.

He has made thousands of pieces since he started woodturning over a decade ago, though he's likely

most known for his hummingbird houses and cowboy hats. Much of his wood comes from local sources like A & H Millwork in Albemarle.

In addition to creating his pieces, Measimer also practices pyrography, which is the technique of decorating wood by burning a design on the surface with a heated metallic point. Many of his hummingbird houses get emblazoned with images of wheat stalks.

He has taught at numerous workshops, including a class at Pfeiffer, and has given demonstrations. His pieces have been on display at the Stanly Arts Guild, the Cabarrus Arts Council (he's a lifetime member and former president of the wood-

turning club in Concord) and the Mint Museum in Charlotte. He donates many of his pieces to local organizations and charities.

While the hummingbird houses take less time to make, for many people, Measimer is synonymous with his cowboy hats. He's made them for all kinds of folks — including a former Miss America and musician Charlie Daniels.

He first learned the techniques for the hats during a class taught by Kentuckian Chris Ramsey, who made a cowboy hat for President George W. Bush in 2007.

Measimer has many types of hats — those made from poplar and those made from oak; those that are top hats or derbies and those that are

traditional John Wayne-like Western-style hats.

He starts with a 65- to 70-pound piece of wood. By turning, shifting and digging into it, he winds up with a cowboy hat about two hours later.

The finished product takes longer, about a week. The wood has to be bent and dried. Once finished, Measimer applies coats of lacquer and hand-rubs each hat with sandpaper. The hats are also quite light — usually between 7 to 9 ounces.

"The best part that I like is how much he enjoys it and how much he enjoys the people," said his wife Tammy. "It never grows old for me to watch him."

But woodturning did not

come easy for Measimer; he took many classes and years of trial and error to really become comfortable with the craft.

In the early days, when he was still learning, he once threw a hat in frustration after a mistake. He sat down and asked himself: "Am I doing this for fun or what?"

It was during this moment that his thinking changed.

"That's when I told myself I didn't care what I made," he said. "I just liked the process of woodturning."

Impact of Covid

Over the years, his reputation has spread not just throughout the state but around parts of the country. He said it's not uncommon for people to come to his

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Measimer's hummingbird houses are one of his most popular pieces.

workshop to watch him create. One woman who lived in New York and had a son in the area told him he was famous after she came by his property to purchase hummingbird houses.

Measimer had a busy 2019 — his hummingbird houses were featured in *Our State* magazine and he attended a Raleigh wood-turning symposium, the American Association of Wood-turners, where he taught classes and networked with many of his fellow woodturning friends.

He had one of his wooden cowboy hats recognized by three judges in Raleigh. Out of around 700 pieces at the

symposium, the judges recognized only around 10 pieces, Measimer said.

"I was just shocked," he said when he found out one of his pieces was recognized.

He was gearing up for 2020 to be even busier until the pandemic hit and almost all of his scheduled in-person events were canceled, though he did have some virtual ones.

"Last year I thought would be my year, where my name really got out there," Measimer said.

He still worked each day in his workshop producing a variety of pieces — espe-

cially hummingbird houses — but he missed the connection he's able to forge with people at many of the annual events.

"I look forward to demonstrating and teaching," he said.

With Covid cases decreasing as more people get vaccinated, Measimer has several scheduled events happening this year including ones in Michigan and Asheville.

Shaped by his military service

Measimer plans to donate one of his wooden hats, known as Freedom, which is emblazoned with a bald

eagle and an American flag and that he made out of Ash from the New London park, to raise funds for the Marines and their families. The artist Michele Parsons completed the pyrography work.

He credits the Marines for helping to mold him into the person he is today. He left Concord High School during his junior year, at only 17, to join the Marines. After graduating from boot camp at Parris Island, South Carolina, he was briefly stationed at an army base in Maryland before heading to Camp Lejeune in Jacksonville.

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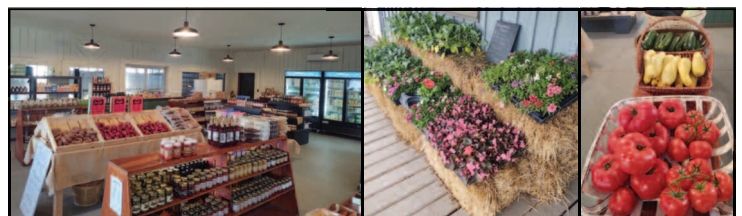


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During his time with the Marines, Measimer spent several months abroad as part of a NATO cruise, where he traveled throughout Europe, including England, France and Germany.

He experienced many highs and lows during his military career, which he said taught him the importance of being resilient and never giving up. The mindset has been especially helpful over the years whenever he's struggled with woodturning.

Throughout his 14 years as a woodturner, Measimer has broken his nose, cheeks, a toe and several fingers. But he doesn't let his injuries deter him from continuing with his passion.

"You've got to keep going through and pressing on," he said.

The best compliment he's ever received during his woodturning career occurred several years ago at Pfeiffer, after he finished a demonstration.

"Man you're just like Bob Ross, you think anybody can do this," one of the students told him.

"I thought that was pretty neat that I was able to explain to them that you could do something if you just give it a try and don't give up," he said.

Despite working on his craft each day for over a decade, Measimer never grows tired of learning



Jerry Measimer created a Freedom hat to raise money for Marines and their families.

more about woodturning.

"There's always something new you can do," he said. "Even after doing thousands of pieces, it's pretty exciting."

It's also calming and relaxing to Measimer. He likes to turn the wood on the lathe while listening to the Blues or watching television.

"I love to just see the shavings fly," he said. "I could do that all day and make nothing."

Now, if he ever breaks a piece, he simply picks up new wood and begins the process again.

"There is always more wood," he said.

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The Hall House is named after Dr. Julius Clegg Hall, a pharmacist who owned Hall's Pharmacy in downtown Albemarle. Built in 1912, the home is now on the National Register of Historic Places.

Old homes have new lives as B&Bs

BY CHRIS MILLER

Many people travel to Stanly County each year for a host of reasons.

They might want to hike Morrow Mountain or kayak along Lake Tillery; they might be enrolled at Pfeiffer University or take classes at Stanly Community College; or they simply might want a nice respite away from big city life in Charlotte.

Over the past few years,

two bed and breakfasts opened in Albemarle, offering guests a unique lodging experience.

The 1891 Inn

One of the popular places for people to stay while they're in the county is the 1891 Inn, which opened in April 2019.

Owners Ron Perrine and Charity Barbee spent the previous year renovating the property, which they bought in late 2017.

Named for the year it was first built, the inn, at 427 Pee Dee Ave., is a 3,300-square-foot, four-bedroom, three-bath Victorian home.

Known historically as the Brown-Parker house, the property is part of the Pee Dee Avenue Historic District, which was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1998. The inn was built by architect L.A. Moody for Albemarle attorney J.M. Brown

Sr. and his wife, Martha Cornelia Anderson, and it stayed in the family until J. Caesar Parker bought it in 1937. The property had been renovated several times over the years before Perrine and Barbee came on the scene.

Perrine and Barbee moved to Albemarle from Cornelius more than 20 years ago to be closer to Barbee's family. Perrine, who retired a few years ago from Inter-

active Safety Products, runs the B&B.

The B&B offers two spacious bedrooms, The Tillery Room and The Badin Room, which both feature a king size bed, flat-screen TV, fireplace, coffee maker, Amazon Alexa device and private shower.

For additional space, guests can inquire about the Maralise Room (it's not available to book online) which offers another king size bed and similar amenities. It was named after the Maralise Hotel, which was built in 1910 and located in downtown Albemarle. According to the B&B's website, President Theodore Roosevelt and actor Jimmy Stewart were famous guests of the hotel.

While staying at the inn, guests can enjoy waking up to a classic breakfast (waffles, omelets, bacon and eggs) around 8:30 each morning.

In order to promote local artists in the area, the B&B has pieces of art on the walls, which people can purchase.

Business was steady

throughout 2019. The B&B had almost 100 bookings. Perrine said weddings and funerals were what brought many of his customers to the area, though tourism spots like Morrow Mountain and speaking engagements at Pfeiffer University also drove customers to the B&B. Many runners participating in events organized by Vac & Dash have also taken advantage of the property.

Though it hasn't materialized, Perrine expects Pfeiffer's new health sciences facility in downtown Albemarle to drive people to the B&B, especially parents visiting their children.

After a nice 2019, things quickly changed in 2020 with the onset of the coronavirus pandemic.

With people afraid to travel, the B&B struggled to get customers.

"The Covid virus really slammed the door on me," Perrine said.

While the B&B struggled throughout the holidays and into the new year, Perrine said business has been on the upswing since March.

He said he had a very robust April, especially around Easter, and is anticipating a strong summer season.

A good portion of the business has been Pfeiffer University-driven, especially with prospective candidates interviewing for positions within the university.

"I'm getting some business culture from Pfeiffer because they have people all the time coming (to the university) and they put them up and when they're putting them up, they use us," Perrine said, noting that he has a "wonderful working relationship" with the school.

"We started off well, the

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Visitors from Florida, New York and California have stopped at the 1891 Inn in downtown Albemarle.

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virus put us down, but we're still hanging in there and we're still looking to rebound," Perrine said, noting that he feels confident customers will come back once the pandemic ends and people can safely travel. He also wants to use his space to host events and weddings.

As someone who has stayed in many bed and breakfasts across the country, one of Perrine's goals was to someday open his own.

"We've traveled to B&B's across the country and we know how to treat people," he said.

He tries to be as approachable and accommodating as possible to his guests. He

also acknowledged that he enjoys meeting and getting to know his guests.

Though the business is still relatively new, the 1891 Inn has done quite well thus far. Sixteen people have posted comments about the 1891 Inn on TripAdvisor, the online travel review platform, and each gave it glowing, five star reviews, with many highlighting how comfortable Perrine and Barbee made them feel.

Perrine's had return guests and though the majority of his customers are from the Southeast, he's had guests from as far as Florida, New York and California.

For more information, people can visit

the1891inn.com.

'Bed and breakfast with a twist'

The bed and breakfast Hall House and Gardens launched its soft opening around November of last year.

The property, at 343 N. Second St., was purchased in 2017 by David and Brenda Scarboro, who spent the next two and a half years renovating it. She died in 2019 before the house was fully renovated.

The Scarboros previously owned and renovated the Brown-Parker House, many decades before Perrine and Barbee transformed it into the 1891 Inn.

The house was built in 1912 and owned by Dr.

Julius Clegg Hall, a pharmacist who owned Hall's Pharmacy in downtown Albemarle. It was recently listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The single family dwelling is a two-story, 3,769-square-foot Georgian home which can sleep five to six people. According to the website, the house "is comprised of a formal dining room, living room, warming kitchen, grand staircase, two lovely sun porches and three bedrooms all restored to their original glory from 1912."

Though David Scarboro resides in the house and operates HH&G, several other people also play key roles. John Williams serves as



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general manager while Scarboro's daughter, Anne Brand, serves as administrative and marketing director.

The HH&G offers three rooms, designed to offer a unique glimpse into the Hall family.

The Apothecary Room, named for Dr. Hall's pharmacy, is a queen-size room filled with memorabilia from his pharmacy, including photographs, newspaper articles and a pulled canvas of a prescription written by Hall.

The Mayfarer Room, which pays homage to Hall's daughter Evelyn and her travels around the world in 1931, features letters and postcards from her

stops in locales such as Naples, Pompei and the Vatican. During her time abroad, she reportedly kissed the Pope's ring and danced with Hollywood leading man Cary Grant.

The Pergola Room is the largest room with a king-size bed, sofa and gas fireplace. It is named after the white pergola outside.

There is also a large historic garden in the back which will be used for weddings and concerts. It's called Brenda's Secret Garden, named after Mrs. Scarboro's favorite book, Williams said. They hope to plant irises (her favorite flower) in the spring.

The garden was designed by Philadelphia landscape

architect William Ritchie around 1914 and later by Earle Draper, a Charlotte-based architect, in the 1920s. Dr. Hall wanted his garden to be compared to those found at the Reynolda House in Winston-Salem and the Biltmore Estate in Asheville, Williams said.

"We're really, really proud of this garden," Williams said, noting it will be a space for the community to use and enjoy.

Unlike most B&Bs, including the 1891 Inn, there is no complimentary in-house breakfast, though Brand said staff will adapt to fit each customers' needs. So, for example, if guests want a morning meal, a trip could be made

to the grocery store to procure food.

The staff is also in the process of converting the garage into a Prohibition era speakeasy, with ceiling and floor tiles from Dr. Hall's pharmacy decorating the inside. While they won't have a liquor license, "the guests can hire someone to come in and do a wine tasting or serve guests from that bar," Brand said.

Compared to more traditional bed and breakfasts, "I guess we're a B&B with a twist," she said.

Brand acknowledged the pandemic created an opportunity for the fledgling business to offer boutique events for people whose plans for bigger events had

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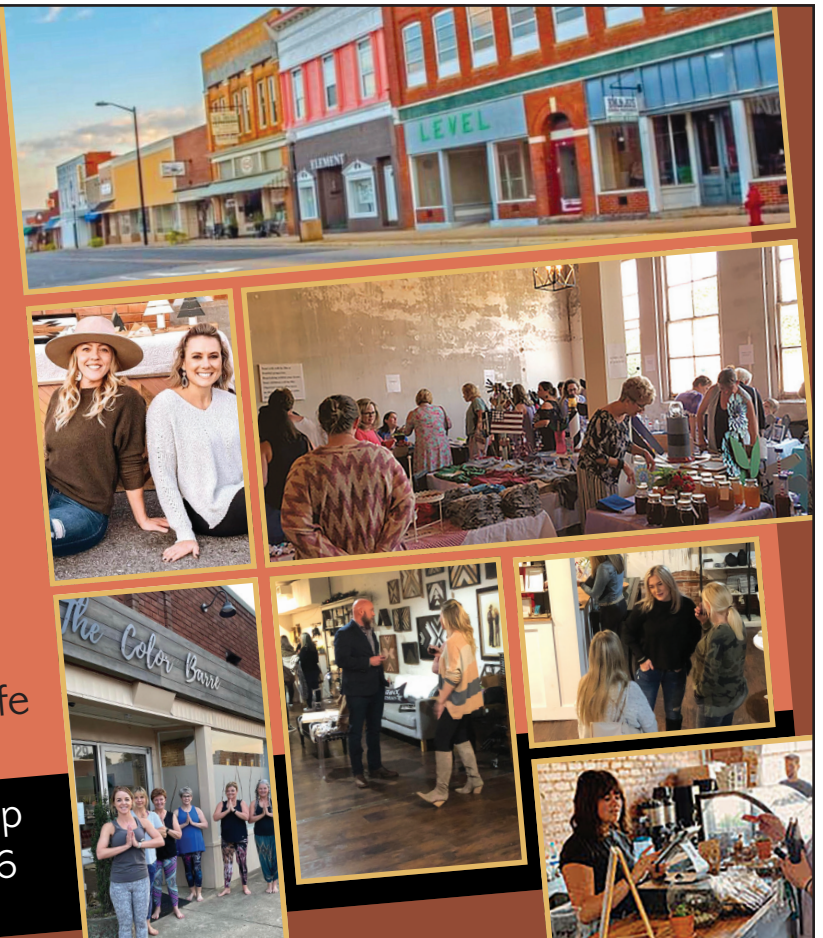
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to be canceled. HH&G has hosted several weddings and baby showers and is planning on hosting small community events such as a charcuterie and cheese class and a chocolate and wine tasting. (The only stipulation is in order to have an event on the property, some members of the party must be guests of the house.)

“I felt like in some ways we were able to reach out to people that were not able to have their special events the way they had originally planned and offer them something also beautiful, but a little more intimate and COVID safe,” Brand said.

While the original plan was to rent the three rooms to different guests, due to the pandemic, HH&G is renting rooms to only one family at a



The Pergola Room is the largest room at Hall House with a king-size bed, sofa and gas fireplace. It is named after the white pergola outside.

time.

“You are not going to be in the house with anybody outside of your group,” Williams said.

He estimates since the soft opening, HH&G has had around a dozen bookings.

The idea was always for HH&G to be a special place for people in the community to utilize and enjoy.

“We are Stanly County and we want to give the people that we grew up with and we live with and our families something amazing,” Brand said. “But then what’s come from that is other people are coming into Albemarle to see their family or for an event and they’re going to find it a nice place to stay as well.”

Williams said the idea is to still have an official grand opening, possibly in the spring, though no date has been set.

Visit hallhouseandgardens.com for more information.

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