

Renovated 'castle' Sharon attraction

More than 100 years ago, homes were lit by gas, the main form of transportation was horse and buggy, men wore handsome fedoras and wealthy women were attired in hats with feathers.

Buhl Mansion of Sharon, in its time, was considered high society, and was built by one of the most prominent philanthropic families in the Shenango Valley.

As we pursued in last week's 'Cruisin'', Frank Buhl built the stately stone castle for his wife, Julia, in 1896. Exactly 100 years later, Jim and Donna Winner purchased the mansion, metamorphosing it into a luxurious guesthouse and spa. It was entirely revitalized and refurbished.



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'Cruisin'

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The house was built close to the street because then, there was no car traffic.

Carriages would have arrived through arches in the front. Those structures and three prominent turrets are only two of the distinctive qualities of the home, as

explained by Laura Ackley, general manager. A set of higher steps next to the lower ones allowed an easy exit after alighting from ones' ride.

Not many of the original features remain, but there are some — such as Frank's roll-top desk that now occupies the reception area where the largest turret is located. The two other turrets on the first floor are in the parlor and dining room.



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The original fireplace says 'Good Friends, good fire, good cheer' in the Buhl Mansion library.

Guests entered through the library and were entertained in the double parlor, which has been redesigned to reflect the era.

There is still an original fireplace in the library with

an inscription of a motto Frank loved — "Good friends, good fire, good cheer." The 12-foot-high ceiling

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ings are also original.

The 10 guest rooms are on the second and third floors, where the Buhls actually resided. Laura was kind enough to walk us through the home, pointing out some of its spectacular qualities.

The sunporch/breakfast area looks out onto more than seven acres of garden and a functional greenhouse.

"We winter all our plants there," Laura said, adding it was added in the 1940s by Julia's nephew, Henry Forker.

What is now a formal dining room with 150-year-old mahogany furnishings, was, a century ago, a guest room for the Buhl's nieces and nephews. The house also featured a billiards room and a third floor ballroom.

Although people enter through a side door, the front doors on the wide porch opening onto the foyer are original.

Up the stairs is a guest room that once was Julia's bedroom and is in the largest turret. Across the

hall was Frank's bedroom with an original fireplace.

"The woodwork here is beautiful," Laura pointed out.

The top of the stairs provide a good view of the stained glass window, which replaced the original.

Laura provided an interesting anecdote about the den, one of her favorites areas in the house. Apparently, Frank wanted the den in the front part and Julia said that was fine if there were lace curtains on the windows. He objected, opting for blinds. That wouldn't do for Julia so the den was located on the side of the home.

His den also has original floors of which very few rooms have, per Laura.

In the area once used as a ballroom, the Buhls' nieces and nephews roller skated.

"You can still see slices in the floor," Laura acknowledged.

A truly stark contrast is in the basement where a dirt floor and its surroundings was replaced with a serene white decor, perfect for a



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The entranceway of the Buhl Mansion has two different levels of steps. The higher steps on the left were for people who got out of a carriage. The steps on the right were for the people to walk up from the actual driveway.

spa, with latticed ceilings and all the pampering amenities.

Outside once again, we reflected on the magnificence of it all. One hundred fifty stone masons from Italy worked on the mansion.

"Nothing in this mansion is duplicated and has balance, but no symmetry. All the turrets are different, too."

An incredible observation is that it cost \$60,000 to complete in 1896 at a time

when Sharon had a population of 10,000 and the 2,400 people of Buhl Industries we paid 10 cents an hour.

This was Frank's dream for his wife, and when asked how he and his wife would feel today at what the Winners accomplished, Laura responded, "They would be thrilled."

(To submit a Cruisin' idea, contact Lugene Hudson at (724) 654-6651, extension 620 or lhudson@ncnewsonline.com.)