

The James Madison Inn stands as a sentinel over Town Park just two blocks from historic Madison's downtown square area.



THE JAMES MADISON INN

Two older gentlemen seated in the lobby of the James Madison Inn were having a disagreement.

"It is, too!" one said.

"It is not!" retorted the other.

The back-and-forth "is, too" and "is not" exchanges were overheard by a hotel associate working in the area.

"Tell my friend here," the "is, too" gentleman said to the Inn associate, "that this is a new hotel."

"Yes, it is only three years old," the associate confirmed.

"It is not!" the doubter blurted before he could catch himself.

All three had a laugh and the associate explained that the James Madison Inn opened as a new facility in early 2007.

The hotel looks as though it has stood for many years in the midst of other buildings of Madison's renowned historic district.

That was the plan when Madisonians Everett and Jane Royal decided to build the facility that stands as a sentinel across West Washington Street from Town Park and just two blocks from Madison's downtown square. The hotel was not in the Royal couple's

plans when they moved to Madison in 1996. In fact, Jane had asked Everett to promise "not" to do any commercial development after they moved from the Atlanta area.

But, Everett did not keep that promise. He began developing the area behind the location of the Inn in the early 2000s. His centerpiece, though, is the James Madison Inn. He conceived the design, drew sketches at his drawing board and local architect Tripp Albrooks added the necessary details to bring Everett's vision to life. Four years after the hotel opened, Jane is quick

Old-world
Wharm to
Downtown
Madison

MADISON INN

By Kim Jackson



to add, "I'm really pleased with the way it turned out."

Though it is designed to look "historic," once inside the James Madison Inn's 17 guest rooms and two grand suites, it becomes evident that the hotel is totally and luxuriously modern while still reflecting an aura of historic ambience. Each of the rooms and the two suites is named for a home located in Madison's historic district. Each room contains furniture pieces crafted by local artisans. A local artist's rendering of the historic home for which the room is named hangs above the fireplace mantle in that room. The towering lobby area is decorated with local artists' paintings, mostly of local faces and scenes.

James Madison Inn is the only hotel in Madison's downtown area, which once was home to two other hotels before they burned a number of years ago. The Inn's amenities located on its campus include a spa and conference center. An outdoor area with gazebo overlooks the historic Round Bowl Spring Park pond. That location is where more and more couples are choosing for their wedding ceremony.

The hotel is but one piece of a puzzle that falls neatly into place as couples plan their special day. An outdoor wedding is most common in the gazebo/pond area located just behind the Inn. However, the conference center serves as an indoor facility for weddings and receptions, as well as a venue for various other meetings and gatherings. With upscale Town 220 Restaurant located only steps from the Inn's front door, and with caterers, florists and gift shops not much farther away, the services a wedding party wants, needs and requires are easily accessible.

The gazebo just recently was the



The lobby of the James Madison Inn features a grand chandelier and paintings of local scenes and faces by local Madison artist Susie George.



Each of the 17 luxuriously appointed guest rooms at the James Madison Inn is named for a home in Madison's historic district. PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRENDA UPTON



General Manager Jake Grant and Assistant General Manager Jennifer Singleton of the James Madison Inn. PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHNNY SOLESBEE



The breakfast room in the basement at James Madison Inn serves as a casual gathering place for guests and is where breakfast is served daily to hotel guests.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BEE NOA UPTON



setting for a marriage proposal, one that put the hotel's staff into overdrive. As Inn General Manager Jake Grant tells it, the front desk received a call from a guest who was an hour from arrival at the Inn. The caller explained that he had decided to propose marriage to his girlfriend while staying at the hotel and wondered if the staff could do something to help him make it more special. With little time for planning and execution, Grant said the hotel staff went into high gear. The result was candles lighting the nearby Spring/Wellness Trail leading to the area of the hotel's gazebo. When the couple followed the candles to their end, they found a carpet of flower petals strewn about in the grass surrounding the gazebo. That was the setting for the fellow to make his proposal.

When the couple arrived back at the hotel, the staff undetected checked to make sure an engagement ring was on the girl's finger, that she indeed had accepted the proposal. With that determined, a bottle of champagne was presented to the newly-engaged couple. For Grant and Assistant General Manager Jennifer Singleton and their staff, it was just another day they enjoyed while helping to make it a special one for a couple of guests. That is an example of what Grant says a truly boutique hotel staff can do for its

guests - personalize the attention each receives.

"Anyone can build a beautiful building," Grant said. "It's the service that sets apart the James Madison Inn."

The front desk staff handles every detail of a guest's stay at the Inn. "If we can get guests here, we know we can make them happy," Grant said. He credits that attention to detail for James Madison Inn's "huge return rate" by former guests. Those satisfied guests tell their friends and that word-of-mouth helps get first-time guests booking their own stays at the Inn. Grant also credits the Madison community for adding to the Inn's success. "The hotel is very fortunate to be in a community that hosts a number of special events throughout the year," he said. "And, its location across the street from Town Park, where many of those events take place, is a plus as well."

When all of Madison's annual events are thrown into the mix, coupled with the visits of antique and historical architecture buffs, the pool for attracting guests at the Inn grows even larger.

The Inn is located 30 miles from Athens, home of the University of Georgia. Fans of the Georgia Bulldogs often spend fall football game weekends at the Inn. It also is a lodging destination for spectators attending the Masters Golf Tournament at Augusta



Everett and Jane Royal, owners of James Madison Inn, also occupy a third-floor penthouse and are shown in the living room of the Royal Penthouse. PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHNNY SOLESBEI



provides unique services and products that a guest can't find anywhere else," Grant said. Those guests have come from around the world. Literally. They come to a vibrant Madison that Grant likens to "a modern-day Mayberry."

And, when those guests leave the James Madison Inn, chances are very good they will leave with pleasant memories of their stay. One thing is for certain: Each guest will receive a handwritten thank-you card from the James Madison Inn's general manager. That's just one more personal touch the staff enjoys doing at the historic-looking, but thoroughly modern James Madison Inn.

(For more details or an online tour of the James Madison Inn, go to www.jamesmadisoninn.com)

National Golf Club, located about 100 miles east of Madison. Downtown Atlanta and Turner Field, home of the Atlanta Braves baseball team, is an hour away on Interstate 20, which is accessible about two miles from downtown Madison and the Inn.

Grant, whose hospitality manage-

ment degree has afforded him experience with the Ritz-Carlton at Reynolds Plantation on nearby Lake Oconee and with one of 22 sites at Disney World in Orlando, believes the young Madison hotel is "boozing with potential." The James Madison Inn is "an anomaly... an independent boutique hotel that



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