

HOMIE MAGAZINE

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The Judge's Room at
the Horace Kellogg
Homestead Bed and
Breakfast in Amherst.



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JERREY ROBERTS

Pioneer Valley B&Bs

A place to lay
your head —
and so much more

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The following is an excerpt from this article.

The Horace Kellogg Homestead in Amherst is named for the farmer who built the house in 1828.

Visitors to Valley B and Bs find a

HOME AWAY FROM HOME

**By CHERYL B. WILSON
Gazette Contributing Writer**

Inviting strangers into your home on a regular basis might not appeal to every homeowner, but local operators of bed and breakfast establishments say they enjoy it very much, as do their guests. Some travelers may like the cookie-cutter architecture, décor and breakfast bars of national motels chains with their predictability and anonymity, but there are those visitors to the Pioneer Valley who say they prefer the personal atmosphere and warm welcome of a B and B.

"If I want more privacy I'll stay in a motel," said Judy Steyer of Homer, Alaska. "But if I'm in the country, I want to get a feel for the community."

Steyer and her husband, Bill, stayed last month at the Horace Kellogg Homestead Bed and Breakfast in Amherst with their daughter, Saanta, who was looking at East Coast colleges. "I wanted a historical experience," Judy Steyer said. She found it in the 1828 clapboard house that has been a B and B for six years.

The Pioneer Valley offers a wide range of B and Bs from historic

homes to luxurious guest suites to a state-of-the-art solar-powered farm. The Web site for the Five College Bed and Breakfast Association lists 35 establishments from which three were chosen for this article.

Many guests at local B and Bs are families checking out the Five Colleges or alums attending special programs. Others are visiting relatives in the area while some are participating in the Paradise City Arts Festival or other cultural events or here on business.

Most area B and Bs are small, offering one, two and three rooms. The owners do the work themselves, without hiring waitresses or chamber maids. They truly are opening their homes to unknown visitors but often their guests become lifelong friends.

It takes a certain type of person to operate a bed and

breakfast out of their home, says Craig Della Penna, owner of Sugar Maple Trailside Inn in Florence "I think you have to like people and [be] open-minded about people," he said.

But, is it intrusive having guests in your home all the time? After all, running a small B and B is quite different from operating a full-scale inn with restaurant. It's more like sharing your home with

strangers.

Most guests respect the B and B keepers' privacy. "They know they are coming to your home," explained Susan Mallett of the Horace Kellogg Homestead. "Sometimes [before guests arrive] I worry, but as soon as I meet them I know it's going to be fine," she said.

Susan and Stephen Mallett came from upstate New York to



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The living room at the Horace Kellogg Homestead in Amherst



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At the Horace Kellogg Homestead in Amherst, owners Susan and Stephen Mallett serve guests a full-cooked breakfast, featuring quiche, pancakes, French toast, casseroles and omelets. Typical “starters” include grapefruit halves topped with berries and quick bread.

the Pioneer Valley in 2000. While visiting their friends Leslie and Elaine Cox of Hampshire College, the Malletts decided Amherst seemed a perfect place for a B and B. The Coxes found the Horace Kellogg House for them.

The Horace Kellogg Homestead

The Horace Kellogg Homestead, named for the farmer who built the house in 1828, is ideally situated in Amherst, on Route 116 south of town, not far from the Amtrak train station and within easy walking distance of downtown. A PVT bus stops right outside the door.

Recent guests, in addition to the Steyer family, include recruiters for Teach Across America and two reporters from London for the BBC who were interviewing academic psychologists from Amherst to San Francisco.

Many guests are return customers, the Malletts said, and some have become friends. Late last month, they were in Washington, D.C., staying with former guests who also run a B and B. They did a barter exchange for two nights. The Washington couple’s daughter went to Amherst College and

now is a coach at Smith College so they visit the area often.

The Horace Kellogg Homestead has two guest rooms, each very different. The south-facing Almarina Room, named for Horace Kellogg’s wife, is light and airy with wicker furniture, filmy light blue draperies and rag rugs. There is a queen bed plus a single one which makes it popular for families checking out local colleges. The Judge’s Room, honoring the original owner of the property, Tory Judge Josiah Chauncey, is just across the hall. It has Federal-style mahogany furniture - an impressive carved four-poster bed with the pineapple motif of hospitality, highboy dresser and credenza. The woodwork is Colonial blue-gray-green with Oriental rugs on the wide plank pine floor. The two rooms share a spacious bathroom and there is an additional guest bathroom on the first floor at the foot of the stairs.

The Malletts serve a full-cooked breakfast, offering quiche or pancakes, French toast, casseroles or omelets. Typical “starters” include grapefruit halves topped with berries, orange juice and quick bread. A nearby self-serve coffee and tea station has a small

refrigerator.

Outside, the warm entry courtyard last month had flowering snowdrops and crocuses, planted a few years ago by Susan Mallett as part of the Go Dutch promotion sponsored by Museums10 and the Five College Bed and Breakfast Association. Last fall she planted dozens of daffodils for the town’s 250th anniversary celebration.

With just two bedrooms, the owners often find themselves fully booked. “There are times when we could fill three or four rooms, especially at graduation,” Susan Mallett said. “But two rooms is a good number for maintaining it and doing it adequately.”

The only downside is the necessity of planning well in advance for their own vacations, the Malletts said, a concern voiced by other bed and breakfast owners.

The economic downturn has had a sobering effect on the local B and B owners to varying degrees. The Bermans said that when they started they could count on the B and B income to pay the mortgage and the taxes but that hasn’t been true for the past two years.

Della Penna said that “the kind of traffic that said ‘let’s come up for a weekend’ is slackening off” this year although he is still fully booked. “I’ve always considered it a gem and hope they thrive without raising their prices too much - which they could justifiably do,” Bella noted.

Susan Mallett, whose rates are among the lowest in the area, said she can’t bear to increase the prices.

“I can’t raise prices and prevent parents from coming to see their students,” she explained. Her husband, Steve, quipped, “It’s our stimulus package.”

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The Almarina Room, named for Horace Kellogg’s wife, is light and airy with wicker furniture, film light blue draperies and rag rugs. It is one of two guest rooms at the Horace Kellogg Homestead in Amherst.