



Elmhurst Reimagined

This historic property in Caldwell was built in 1824 as an inn and tavern for travelers along the nearby turnpike. Today, the home is being meticulously restored to live up to its rich history. On The National Registry of Historic Places since 1975, Elmhurst is steadily working its way back to its former glory.

When you step under the two-story portico, between the white columns, and across the threshold into the bright, airy foyer of Elmhurst, you can feel the sense of history that caroms through this nearly 200-year old property.

The history of the town of Caldwell itself traces back to this former inn and tavern. Built in 1824 on the banks of The Greenbrier River, Elmhurst was the creation of one Henry B. Hunter. A new toll bridge had recently replaced the local ferry crossing and Hunter had the keen sense to take advantage of the necessary stop that a crossing traveler would have to make.

Above: Elmhurst was built in 1824 and served as an inn and tavern just off the James River & Kanawha Turnpike.



Clockwise from above: Heart pine floors and handcarved mantles accent this open floorplan;The red brick exterior contrasts nicely with the white columns and portico;A handcarved staircase leads to the second floor;The attention to details on the home set it apart—like this forged knocker hanging on the deep-set, solid entrance door;The kitchen features exposed oak beams, an apron front farm sink and a view out to the east;The property was entered into The National Registry of Historic Places in 1975.



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That, coupled with the inn's tree-shaded, peaceful setting at the confluence of The Greenbrier River and Howard's Creek, meant Elmhurst quickly became a busy stayover on the old stage and wagon road. With style and panache rarely seen in early 19th-century inns, Elmhurst managed to attract a number of travellers looking to visit some of the pastoral countryside and mineral springs for which the area was so well known. In fact, registry records show that 8th President Martin Van Buren and his Secretary of War were guests here in 1837.

John North purchased the property in the mid 1800s, and presented the tavern to his daughter Isabelle and her new husband James Caldwell in 1851. After the Battle of Lewisburg in 1862, Confederate General Henry Heth withdrew his forces across the Greenbrier, burned the toll bridge into the chilly spring waters, and set up gun emplacements and trenches near the home. In 1864, Isabelle became gravely ill and her illness prevented Federal Forces from evacuating the entire property. The officers even went to the lengths of having an Army surgeon confirm that moving the family member would inevitably cause her death. Legend has it that the family had just enough advanced notice to hide their most prized possessions, including burying the silverware beneath the dirt floor of the poultry house which still stands in the yard today.

In notes by the U.S. Department of the Interior, when presenting the property to the National Registry of Historic Properties, the author writes, "It was the existence of inns like Elmhurst that made travel a bit more pleasant. This helped in its own way in the development of commerce between east and west...and stages needed a place to stop and change horses while giving their passengers a place to rest and have a meal. Elmhurst admirably satisfied these, and the house attracted well-known people to the "picnic parties" held there by guests from the nearby Old White Hotel."

Ironically, it was this very development that Elmhurst helped to foster that ultimately led to its decline. As travel emphasis switched from road to rail following the civil war, the bustling business of roadside inns like Elmhurst came to a slow demise.

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This historic photo shows the home in the early 1900s, when the front of the home featured an upper porch.

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The property shifted through a number of owners over the following years. And each year the vines and shrubbery continued their snail-paced advance upon the structure. When Emil Cadle purchased the property in 2011, the vines had not only grown up through the walls, but had begun to creep through the windows of the home.

“When I first saw Elmhurst, I realized it was in desperate need of rescue,” remembers Cadle. “Its’ porches sagging, overgrown landscaping and the interior needing a fresh start... it seemed overwhelming.”

But Cadle and local builder Rocky Carr set to work envisioning a restoration that would take time, patience, and a deep reverence for historical integrity.

“Rocky and I agreed it was BIG but not too large a project for us. Being one of 17 children, born and raised locally in a small, two-bedroom farmhouse in Grassy Meadows, I was impressed with the enormous size and beauty of the estate.”

These first impressions of Elmhurst are indeed warranted—its aged red brick exterior, the symmetry of its construction, the decorative front door flanked by reeded pilasters and the arched overlight with filigree designs of ovals, circles and diamonds.

Another unique feature of Elmhurst is the knee-high, handstacked stone wall that fronts the home and opens to the narrow pathway leading to its entrance. With the deep-set door beneath a portico supported by four square columns and capped by an ornamental steeped gable, the front of the home is both stately and elegant in its symmetry and proportion. Two high chimneys appoint both the western and eastern flanks of the home, adding a gothic touch to this otherwise Georgian masterpiece.

Upon entering the home you'll find wide-plank, heart pine floors throughout the first level—a “double-pile” layout with a wide central hall and two large rooms opening on each side. A carved staircase leads to a number of rooms on the second level that work and wind their way to the back of the home, which presents a layout more attuned to farmhouses of the surrounding countryside.

Although some of Elmhurst's rooms have been partitioned to include bathrooms and other modern amenities, the overall integrity of the design remains intact, and the structure sits mostly as it has for the past 180 years.



Emil and Linda Cadle, owners of Elmhurst, have worked tirelessly to restore the home to its former glory.

The original kitchen sat detached from the home, as was typical for safety reasons in earlier times. Once the old kitchen was connected to the rest of the home, this area became the servants' quarters. Today, the kitchen features solid cabinetry, an apron-front farm sink, hand hewn exposed oak beams, and a beautiful view out to the Eastern side of the property.

Hand-carved mantels on the 11 original fireplaces, as well as other intricate woodwork throughout the home, are exquisite and represent the attention to detail often found in such craftsmanship of the 19th-century.

"We strive to ensure that this kind of detail can once again claim its rightful place in the history of Greenbrier County," says Cadle.

Flanked by both The Greenbrier River and Howard's Creek, the expansive property is dotted with ancient oaks, sugar maples, and hemlocks.

Finches and jays flit about with nary an inkling the Midland Trail carries traffic between Lewisburg and White Sulphur Springs only 40 yards away.

As Mr. Cadle looks out across the property that he continues to restore to its old glory, he looks forward to the home's future.

"Many of my family and friends envision Elmhurst as a Bed and Breakfast or maybe a place where Civil War reenactments could be held. My wife Linda and I hope it can be preserved for future generations and can claim it's rightful place in the rich history of Greenbrier County. A place where adults and children can enjoy its picturesque setting on the beautiful Greenbrier River."

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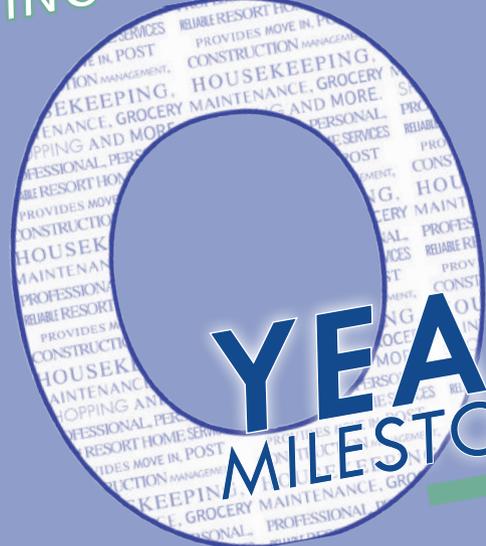





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