

# Update on The Alexander Guest House

(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on May 25, 2015)

Rick Dover is the founder and general manager of the Family Pride Corporation which is now known as Dover Development Corporation. He is also the prime mover for the renovation of the original Guest House later known as the Alexander Inn and soon to become **The Alexander Guest House**.

The total investment is now \$8,000,000! Pause a minute and take that in.

As you will recall, for several years the Oak Ridge Heritage & Preservation Association and others wondered how in the world the historic old inn could be saved. Little did we know that its savior, Rick Dover, was working all along attempting to secure the building to preserve it for historical purposes as well as make it into a functioning senior living center.

I well recall a few years ago when Dave Miller was routinely bringing the fact to the ORHPA membership's attention at monthly meetings that animals were living in the ruins and vandals were often seen there. But all too often the damage was done before Dave could alert the police.

Well, those days are long gone now. The building is really taking shape. Rick Dover has provided tours when requested. We have taken the National Park Service and Department of Energy officials by the inn when they have come to town to explore the Manhattan Project National Historical Park sites. I can say with assurance that neither Los Alamos, NM, nor Hanford, WA, have anything to compare with The Guest House at the Alexander Inn.

The museum that Rick intends to place in the main lobby will surely become a "spoke" in the Manhattan Project National Historical Park's "hub and spoke" concept. The hub will be located in the center of the city and could likely include aspects of the American Museum of Science and Energy as well as the Oak Ridge Room of the Oak Ridge Public Library and the Center for Oak Ridge Oral History, also presently located in the library. While the hub has not yet been defined, the National Park Service visitors have expressed their appreciation for the hub and spoke concept.

Interestingly enough, the last group of National Park Service visitors were taken to the Children's Museum of Oak Ridge (another "spoke" of the national park, located in yet another of the original Manhattan Project buildings, the Highland View Elementary School building). We were unable to take the visitors by The Guest House at the Alexander Inn on that visit because they stayed too long in the Children's Museum of Oak Ridge! We have some great exhibits of our history already in place there and the park service noted that.

I have been contacted to assist in the selection of photographs to decorate the walls of The Guest House at the Alexander Inn and especially to create a "history wall" where many of Ed Westcott's black and white images have been selected. You know I would encourage the use of my friend Ed Westcott's iconic images! He is the best and as I have often remarked, without Ed's photographs, we would be hard pressed to effectively tell the story of our history.

It is very good to see the beloved old inn coming back. I know those of you who were here during its heyday have watched with awe as it has been reborn. Some of you are signing up to live there. We can all thank Rick Dover for his inspiring vision and willingness to take risks.

The Guest House at the Alexander Inn is obviously one of the most historic structures in Oak Ridge. My, my, the stories those aged wall could tell if only they could speak!

**The Alexander Guest House** has fulfilled a 10-year dream for Rick Dover. Because of a recommendation by Patrick McIntyre, the Tennessee State Historical Preservation Officer, the local Department of Energy's willingness to be flexible and the East Tennessee Preservation Alliance's connection with Rick, things fell into place and Rick did get the building and has led the restoration.

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For Rick, it all started when his grandfather needed special care. Rick was unable to locate a suitable facility. Rick says he became interested in restoring old buildings, "because they tell us who we are and where we are going as a community." He began turning these buildings into assisted living facilities and his grandfather was among his first guests.

All the restoration work for ***The Alexander Guest House*** has been done with the express intent to restore the exterior appearance to that of the authentic early Guest House. Rick travelled to Chicago to obtain the original signed drawings from Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. Those original drawings are being used as a guide in the restoration.

If you drive by the inn now, you can see that original appearance beginning to become a reality again. Even from the Turnpike, the building can be seen in its original glory!

I wish Howard Harvey could see what is being done to his precious old building. Howard put an enormous amount of energy and effort into trying to protect the building until something could be done. It was Howard who replaced the doors damaged by vandals and who plugged the holes they created.

I know Howard would be pleased with what Rick Dover is doing with the building. Bill Wilcox, too, would be proud, I am sure. You know, Bill is responsible for the "Guest House" being included in the name. Rick listened to Bill!

Senior Solutions Management Group is managing the senior living center. Their web site provides the details regarding how to become a resident: <http://www.ssmgrp.com/guest-house-alexander-inn-senior-living-oak-ridge-tennessee>

Plans now call for ***The Alexander Guest House*** to open in early June. The final interior trim, fixtures and flooring is going in at present. Progress is being made daily. There will be 64 apartments in the facility.

Deposits are being taken now and tours can be arranged by appointment. For information call Christina Trentham at 865-293-6563.

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Rick Dover speaks to the East Tennessee Preservation Alliance's 2014 Annual Conference attendees at the first reception at ***The Alexander Guest House***



The historic inn is coming back to life as ***The Alexander Guest House***