



THE FERRINGTON HOUSE INN CELEBRATES ITS SILVER ANNIVERSARY

ONE OF THE NATION'S TOP SMALL HOTELS CELEBRATES ITS PAST AND CHARTS ITS FUTURE

Pittsboro, NC, January 18, 2012 – Proprietor R.B. Fitch remembers the exact moment he decided to build an inn: it was in Paris in 1985. He and his wife Jenny had started a restaurant five years earlier; by now it was established and their attention turned to opening a small inn. And they wanted membership in an association called Relais & Chateaux, an association of exceptional inns and restaurants they had grown to appreciate during their travels. So while on a trip in Paris, they stopped by Relais' headquarters – only to be told they could not qualify, since they had to have both a restaurant and an inn. "So we built an inn," said R.B. with typical understatement.

Twenty five years ago, in the winter of 1987, The Ferrington House Inn opened its doors, offering a vision of Southern hospitality that combined exceptional service and cuisine in a relaxed country setting. Running an Inn with a European inspired "art de vivre" – or art of living – in rural North Carolina then may have seemed risky, but R.B. and Jenny had a vision they felt would be embraced by travelers.

Actually, they had toyed with the idea of adding an Inn for a while. They thought the Inn would complement dinner at "the House" by giving guests a convenient place to stay after a multi-course meal with wine. And they knew they could set the Inn apart by adding amenities like a sumptuous a la carte breakfast and afternoon tea for Inn guests at the House.

Happily, the Inn did become a Relais & Châteaux member in 1988 – a distinction it continues to hold – and today it is one of the most lauded small hotels in the U.S.

In 2011, it was voted the number three best small hotel (under 100 rooms) by the readers of *Condé Nast Traveler*. *Departures Magazine* calls it one of the top culinary destinations in the world. And both AAA and Forbes have bestowed its highest awards – Five Diamonds and Five Stars respectively – on the Inn consecutively for over twelve years.

And there were the more humorous aspects of running an inn. Richard Delaney, now General Manager of The Old Edwards Inn in Highlands, NC, served as the Inn's first General Manager, from its opening to 2004. He remembered one such moment when "I was summoned to room 1. I was told we had damage caused by a guest. As I entered I saw a stiletto shoe stuck into the closet door – just hanging there like a piece of art. Apparently they had not had such a great anniversary and we sent them a bill to replace the door."

How The Inn Came to Be

The story of Ferrington House began in 1980, when R.B. and Jenny opened The Ferrington House



Restaurant. It was the first business in Fearington Village, the community eight miles south of Chapel Hill they were building, and it offered an innovative vision of seasonal, regional cuisine that helped usher in the area's farm to fork culinary movement. Set in the former Fearington homestead – a two story, white colonial revival home – the Restaurant is surrounded by mature specimen trees, white painted farm buildings and rolling pastures. This setting, with its authentic references to North Carolina's agrarian heritage, soon became a desired wedding destination as well.

The Fitches had been captivated by their stays at Relais & Chateaux properties in Europe and in the U.S. During a stay at The Point, a small Relais property originally built as a retreat for the Rockefellers in New York's Adirondack mountains, they found themselves the only guests at the establishment. They chatted with the Innkeeper who passionately explained what Relais stood for – exceptional cuisine, service and amenities and a sense of place, a celebration of the senses and personal harmony – and its importance to the hotel's identity. An idea was born.

R.B. and Jenny knew where the Inn would be located: on a knoll between fruit trees and overlooking fields a short walk from the Restaurant. For design inspiration, they took landscape designer Dan Sears and architect Jon Condoret on a trip to England to stay in numerous Relais properties. Every night they shared notes about what stood out at each inn, and soon the design for a 14 room (later expanded to 16 rooms) inn, centered around a garden courtyard, crystallized.

After construction, Jenny then decorated each room with complementary colors and fabrics, and original art and antiques. She also soon encircled the Inn with gardens for the benefit of guests. Perhaps the most famous is the eponymous Jenny's Garden, which included a central water feature flanked by four symmetrical parterred beds and then by a three sided trellis with brick walking path underneath, allowing guests to enjoy the garden from all angles.

As its centerpiece: a water sculpture designed by North Carolina artist Wayne Trapp playfully echoing the features of Fearington's mascots, the Belted Galloway cows.

The Inn roughly doubled in size in 1995 with the construction of the Park Building, a two story building that faces the Village Center. Park Building suites are larger than those in the Inn Building, and many have individual private courtyard entrances. There are now a total of 32 suites at the Inn.

To see a carousel of photos documenting some of the people and stories behind the Inn, visit <http://www.fearington.com/house/anniversary.asp>.

The Inn Today

In 2010, Fearington House expanded its guest offerings significantly when it opened the Spa at Fearington. The 4,000 square foot tranquil day spa sits on a hill looking over the Village Center. Says General Manager Theresa Chiettini: "The Spa has proved popular not only with our day visitors and leisure travelers staying at the Inn, but also with corporate groups and wedding parties who want the complete retreat experience," said Theresa. "We're very excited to offer that now."

This past summer, Theresa oversaw the renovation of Fearington's casual restaurant, The Fearington Granary. Changes included a dramatic expansion of the bar area and the addition of dinner service. The change now gives Inn guests another dining option during their stay.



What do future plans hold? On the immediate horizon is the completion of renovations of a number of bathrooms in the Inn Building! Longer term, there's a continuing commitment to maintaining the highest level of service, one that has earned Ferrington House the American Automobile Association and Forbes' top ratings for over a decade. And expect to see more culinary offerings – this in addition to the current roster of wine maker dinners, culinary classes and wine and beer classes that guests and visitors enjoy.

R.B. muses, "After a while, all the big hotels feel the same. But people like the sense of discovery that comes with small, individual properties. When I travel, I love inspecting the gardens, the food, the rooms of a property and talking to the people working there. Every Relais property is different, and that makes for a fun adventure."

About The Ferrington House

The Ferrington House is a member of Relais & Chateaux, an association of the finest restaurants and hotels in the world. The 32-room Inn offers individually decorated rooms and stunning garden views. The Restaurant serves contemporary American cuisine and is the only AAA Five Diamond restaurant in the country that is also Green Certified™. The Spa at Ferrington opened in 2010, offering yet another reason to visit this elegant country destination. Ferrington House is 8 miles south of Chapel Hill and 20 miles west of the Raleigh/Durham International Airport. For more information visit: www.ferrington.com; to see a carousel of photos documenting some of the people and stories behind the Inn, visit <http://www.ferrington.com/house/anniversary.asp>.

About Relais & Chateaux

A worldwide group of individually owned and operated hotels and restaurants, Relais & Chateaux originated in France when six properties banded together in 1954 on the route from Paris to Marseille. This route was called "le Route du Bonheur" or Route of Happiness, since each stop offered. It now has about 500 properties worldwide, including about 60 in the U.S.



(l. to r.) newly installed gardens by the Inn in 1990; Jon Condoret designing the Inn; the Inn under construction

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Appendix: The Inn's Timeline

RB and wife Jenny buy Fearington farm from Jesse Fearington	1974
Approval given for Fearington Village, a planned community	1975
First house completed	1976
Farmhouse renovated, opens as The Fearington House Restaurant	1980
A 14 room Inn is added in the Village Center	1987
Inn and Restaurant accepted as member of Relais & Chateaux	1988
The Inn earns its first AAA Five Diamond award	1995
The Park Building opens, doubling the number of Inn rooms	1996
The Inn earns its first Five Star award from Mobil (now Forbes)	2000
The self-guided Southern "Route du Bonheur" is created	2008
The Library at McIntyre's, our largest meeting suite, opens	2008
The Spa at Fearington, and spa shop Haven, opens	2010

In 2011, the Inn garnered a number of awards and accolades in 2011. Among them:

- World's Best Foodie Destination — American Express's *Destinations* magazine
- Five Star — Forbes Travel Guides
- Five Diamonds for both lodging and restaurant — American Automobile Association
- #3 Best Small Hotel in the US — Reader's Choice Awards, *Conde Nast Traveler*
- #3 Best World Hotel Value — *Travel & Leisure*

