

Dr. Joli Love





A Historic Gem Reborn



The LIGHTLE HOUSE INN

By Jennifer Webb

JOLI AND PAUL knew as soon as they walked in - the historic Lightle House on Race Street was going to be theirs.

It was staged as a bed and breakfast. The previous owners, Doug and Sheila Kilgore, had maintained it, operating it as a bed and breakfast in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The bed and breakfast had been closed for three years, but all the potential was still there, and the location was perfect!

Joli, whose father was a native Arkansan, moved to Italy when she was less than a year old. She returned at the age of 18 as a Harding University student. Paul also has a European background. He has lived in Germany and in Italy where he and Joli were directors and teachers, running a boarding house for Pepperdine University. They trained to care for and travel with 30-50 students at a time.

The Lightle House, designed by architect Charles Thompson and constructed in 1924, is steeped in history with design characteristics that date back to early American Colonial times. You can see the European-style influences. It is located within walking distance of Harding University and enjoys a front row seat for the lively annual White County parades. A grocery store sits across the street, and it is also in close proximity to the fairgrounds and downtown area for local festivals, such as Get Down Downtown and Beats and Eats.

Living in the house and running a law office on the first floor was the initial idea, though it soon became evident that Harding students were seeking boarding alternatives near school. For this reason, all the rooms in the house were filled by family and tenants. The Lightle House's five bedrooms became the home for Harding University students, and the Loves were once again running a boarding house.

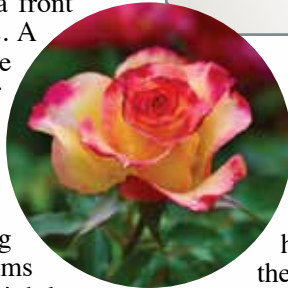
The Loves painted one of the front rooms green with gold trim that pops and accentuates the walls. They dubbed it "the Emerald Room," and Paul ran his law office out of it for many years. The master bedroom was perfect as it was to accommodate the couple.

It gave them a quiet and comfortably large suite with a bathroom and bedroom, featuring a sitting area by the fireplace. It served as their home for over 20 years.

Joli, having earned a Doctorate in French Literature, taught both French and Italian classes at Harding University, while Paul ran his law office from the Emerald Room.

"We want to thank and praise God for the 21 precious years in which we took care of the Lightle House, as she took care of us and dozens of our tenants. It was by God's grace and mercy that we were able to afford and live in this beautiful historic home as the first home we ever owned."

*-Dr. Joli and Paul Love,
Current owners of the Lightle House*



Their lives were filled with work, students, Iris Society meetings, gardening, hosting, fixing everything that broke in the old house, and cutting down 25 trees that were endangering the house.

They hated to cut the trees, but it was either that or risk one falling and causing major damage to the house. They once hosted a Lightle family reunion after the passing of one of its members. Elizabeth Lightle Yingling told Joli, "I'm so glad that you kept the tree that my father planted when I was born."

The tree was scheduled to be cut, but Joli told Paul, "We're going to see if we can't make a bench or something special out of that tree." But when it was cut, it was so rotten it crumbled to dust in their hands.

▶ *Continued on next page*





Dr. Joli & Paul Love with Liz Howell



LIGHTLE
HOUSE
1923

The Lightles told them many stories about the house. Through their stories about weddings, family reunions, gatherings, and time spent together, the Loves realized how much the Lightle House meant to the community. Through the Lightles, God planted the seed of an idea to turn it back into a bed and breakfast.

“Paul and I realize that we have stood on the shoulders of those who, through these 100 years, have run, lived, and loved the house before us. If it were not for their hard work, she would not have lasted.”

*-Dr. Joli Love,
Current owner of the Lightle House*

The Loves almost gave up on the idea at one point and put the house up for sale. No one bought it. They didn't see it yet, but God was slowly unfolding His plans for the Loves and for the Lightle House. When they put the house up for sale, they worked closely with Ms. Liz Howell, who is a real estate agent, and later connected them with professionals to help with the renovations and marketing.

“Ms. Liz Howell has also created invaluable community connections for us, such as bringing this project to the attention of ‘Searcy Living.’ Thank you Ms. Liz and thank you Searcy Living!”

*-Dr. Joli Love,
Current owner of the Lightle House*

Joli retired from Harding and took up classes at CrossPointe Prep. Paul became the in-house legal counsel for Truth for Today in Searcy. Then they finally did the hardest thing of all – they had to tell the students it was time to move out and that they were no longer accepting boarders.

The Loves moved out to make way for renovations, and with the support of Ms. Liz Howell, the house is being restored to its former glory. Each of the five bedrooms has its own bathroom with a sink and shower. Most rooms will have a queen-sized or king-sized bed, and the master suite that the Loves called home for many years is being redone into a bridal suite.



The “Emerald Room,” which was Paul's in-house law office, will probably be converted to a breakfast room with several tables. There will also be a private breakfast room upstairs with windows overlooking the courtyard.

Joli has European china sets and crystal glasses waiting and ready to serve guests, and the carpets on the stairs and rooms upstairs have been pulled up and beautiful historic hardwood floors restored. Each room has an armoire for storing clothes, and beautifully quaint antique furniture and decor.

It will currently be Searcy's only bed and breakfast, and they hope to host not only guests staying for a few nights but also family reunions, weddings, and other celebrations. It is their dream to share their historic home with the community, perhaps hosting open houses and participating in historic home tours. They hope that God will bless their efforts to bring love, laughter, and special memories to the century-old house once more.

If you have a special memory of the Lightle House that you'd like to share, you can email it to Joli and Paul at aposta3@gmail.com.

Watch for the open house signs on the lawn this year, once the renovations are complete. For future reservations, look for the Lightle House Inn website coming soon! ●



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Request a roofing inspection or estimate!

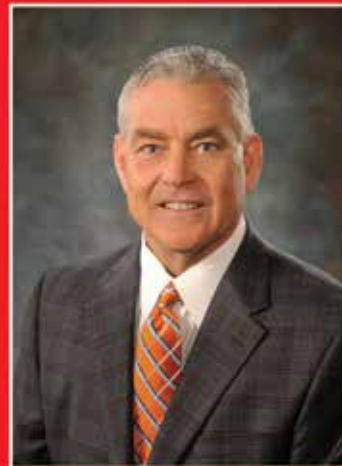


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