



# PLACES | The Doctors' Inn

**O**ur national government was hardly in its teens and Ohio's only half that old when Dr. Peter Allen moved to the frontier town of Kinsman, Ohio, in 1808. As he watched civilization conquer the wilderness, he helped medicine out of its dark ages. Arriving with a black bag filled with herbs and leeches, he soon sought to embrace new scientific advances, helping found what would become the Ohio State Medical Society.

In 1821 Allen hired Willis Smith to build him a fine home in Kinsman. Smith, architect of many early Kinsman homes and the Presbyterian Church, constructed a grand home that earned a spot in history equal to that of its first resident.

Notable for its elaborate detail and symmetry, the house would be one of the finest examples of neoclassical architecture in the Western Reserve, built in wood in the New England manner—both he and Allen had come to Kinsman from Connecticut.

Although Allen's practice kept him traveling on horseback from northeastern Ohio into western Pennsylvania, serving these sparsely populated frontier areas, he found time to educate himself in botany and attend medical congresses.

His peers elected him first president of the Ohio Medical Convention in 1835 as well as a censor tasked with licensing new physicians. The convention initiated the formation of the Ohio State Medical Society (now Association), where Allen served as president in 1856-57.

Peter's son Dudley, born in the grand Kinsman home, became a doctor in his own right, practicing with his father and uncle in Kinsman. Dudley's son, Dudley Peter, was also born in the Kinsman house. At the age of thirteen, his parents sent Dudley Peter to a preparatory school at Oberlin College, and to provide the



Connecticut architect-builder Willis Smith constructed this home for Dr. Peter Allen in Kinsman, Ohio. Many of its classical details, such as the fluted pilasters with Ionic capitals, are repeated on interior woodwork.

necessary support and protection, the entire family moved to Oberlin.

Dudley Allen lived and practiced in Oberlin until his death, although he briefly chaired the medical department of Western Reserve College in Cleveland, resigning after a year to end the tiring commute. His son would become a noted surgeon in Cleveland.

When the Allens sold the Kinsman house out of the family in 1865, they ensured it would be in good hands, but just in case, they removed the parlor woodwork and installed it in two homes they owned in Cleveland.

The new owners held it for two generations without altering it.

Smith built well—well enough that the Allen home still proudly stood as the 21st Century began but sadly as out of date and unwanted as those herbal medications in Dr. Allen's first black bag.

Richard Thompson made his livelihood manufacturing electrical wire and cable, eventually spreading factories from Northern Ohio to Texas, at least until 1993 when he decided to step back from daily operations and go back to the earth

When the Thompsons had the house restored, the foundation was raised to add a rathskeller. The wide patios hosted Friday night gatherings over the summer.



and farm. He chose Kinsman because he wanted to preserve the land and the community's heritage. In 2010 he and his wife established the Richard and Rhonda Thompson Foundation to restore historic buildings.

That's where his path crossed that of Peter Allen. In 2008 Thompson bought the house and restored it with imaginative adaptive reuse.

"We live in a Century house ourselves, and that got us started in historic preservation," Thompson said. "There were no other possibilities in the area like this. The Peter Allen house is significant for three reasons—its architecture, its builder, and the people who lived there. It's a unique property."

Thompson decided to turn the old Allen farmhouse into a bed-and-breakfast—with more. He wanted to preserve the home's historic heritage, meticulously restoring its front rooms—parlor, reception hall, study—mixing in only enough modern furnishings in the bedrooms to make it a comfortable for travelers.

But for the home to survive and thrive it needed more than a few bedrooms, so Thompson added the amenities needed to make a full conference center. He jacked up the house and put a rathskeller underneath then grafted on banquet and meeting rooms.

"The house needed a purpose beyond a museum that would allow people to enjoy it," Thompson said.

Opened on May 1, the Peter Allen Inn & Event Center has hosted several travelers and events. The Thompsons hired property managers, who launched a summer series called "Tavern on the Courtyard" with music and light fare on Friday nights to encourage more people to experience the house. Thompson conducts tours of the house and tells stories about its architectural history and that of the Allen family.

"It brings people together in a venue they haven't had for awhile," Thompson said. "We're hoping it will serve the community in many ways." \*

Historical information about the Allen family was provided courtesy of the Ohio State Medical Association.



The parlor in the original home now serves overnight guests. Its dentil cornice molding, fluted columns, wide-board floors, and period-style furnishings reflect the home's original grandeur.

Open beams, brick walls, and tavern-style furnishings in the rathskeller offer a relaxed atmosphere for casual dining.

