

LODGING & dining

SUMMER WHITE HOUSE
Property getting major overhaul, new identity as TwinHouse Inn

BY JOHN TOWNES

Susan Gibbs purchased the former Sprague mansion and estate on Undermountain Road in Lenox three years ago and extensively renovated it with the goal of living on the property and converting it into an inn.

Since then, her plan has not changed – but the location has.

In February, Gibbs purchased the former Berkshire Cottage known as the Summer White House at 17 Main St. in the town center from Frank and Mary Newton for \$601,000. The sale was brokered by John McLean of Berkshire Real Estate Associates.

She is currently renovating the property with plans to open it within a year as the TwinHouse Inn, a combination inn and residence.

She plans to place the Sprague estate on the market, and eventually move into the Summer White House.

“I love the Sprague home on Undermountain Road,” explained Gibbs, a corporate art curator who moved here from Atlanta in 2019. “But it’s too large for one person. My goal had been to live in one section and share the rest with the public as an inn.”

However, along the way she had to change course.

“The local codes would have required extensive changes to convert it into an inn, which I didn’t want to do,” she continued. “It’s too beautiful and stately, and those changes would alter it in ways that I didn’t feel would be right for it.”

Gibbs said she was familiar with the Summer White House and knew it was on the market but had not looked into it initially.

“Then, one day, I drove by and saw that all the lights were on,” she recalled. “I thought



Susan Gibbs is taking on a full-scale renovation of the Summer White House, an established lodging property in central Lenox that she purchased earlier this year. “The vast majority of people who look at older properties like this are put off by what is required, and they don’t see past those issues,” she says. “But I’m one of those small percentage of people who love historic properties and the challenge of restoring them.”

it might be an Open House, and I stopped in to take a look at it. It wasn’t an Open House, but the Newtons gave me a tour anyway, and I was immediately attracted to it. Also, since it was already zoned for a bed and breakfast, I could follow my original plan there. I subsequently made an offer, and it was accepted.”

Located near the central rotary in Lenox, the three-story, 6,000 square-foot Summer White House was built in the Queen Anne style of architecture in the early 1880s by Electra Eddy. It was subsequently purchased

by John Schermerhorn (a cousin of Edith Wharton) in 1885. It gained its name because President Chester Arthur was an early visitor there.

The Newtons had operated it as a bed and breakfast since the 1990s. It had been on the market for about six years.

Gibbs believes that most people who had looked at the property in the past were dissuaded by the extent of restoration work and updating it needed. This was not a concern for her, she said, noting that she has renovated 14 historic properties over 30 years.

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Art and restoration

Gibbs is the principal of TwinHouse Art Advisory, an art consulting and collection management firm that serves private and corporate clients, including Delta Airlines. She now operates that business from Lenox.

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