

# A train lovers Bed & Breakfast

by Lee Lyons

**CHESTERTON** - Some people just like old buildings. They appreciate the architecture, the style and function that harkens back to a lost era, the history that cries out from every brick and archway.

Some people just like trains, the power and force, the clackaty-clack of the rails, the lure of travel and the forlorn call of the horn at night.

If you like both, you just might do what Richard and Ann Riley have done and buy an empty train depot and resolve to turn it into a Bed & Breakfast for other train lovers and a weekend retreat for yourself and your family.

The Rileys have been spending their weekends at the old freight depot in downtown Chesterton hauling debris, tearing out old wood, and planning where the new features will go that will ultimately turn this long-unused structure into a functioning building again.

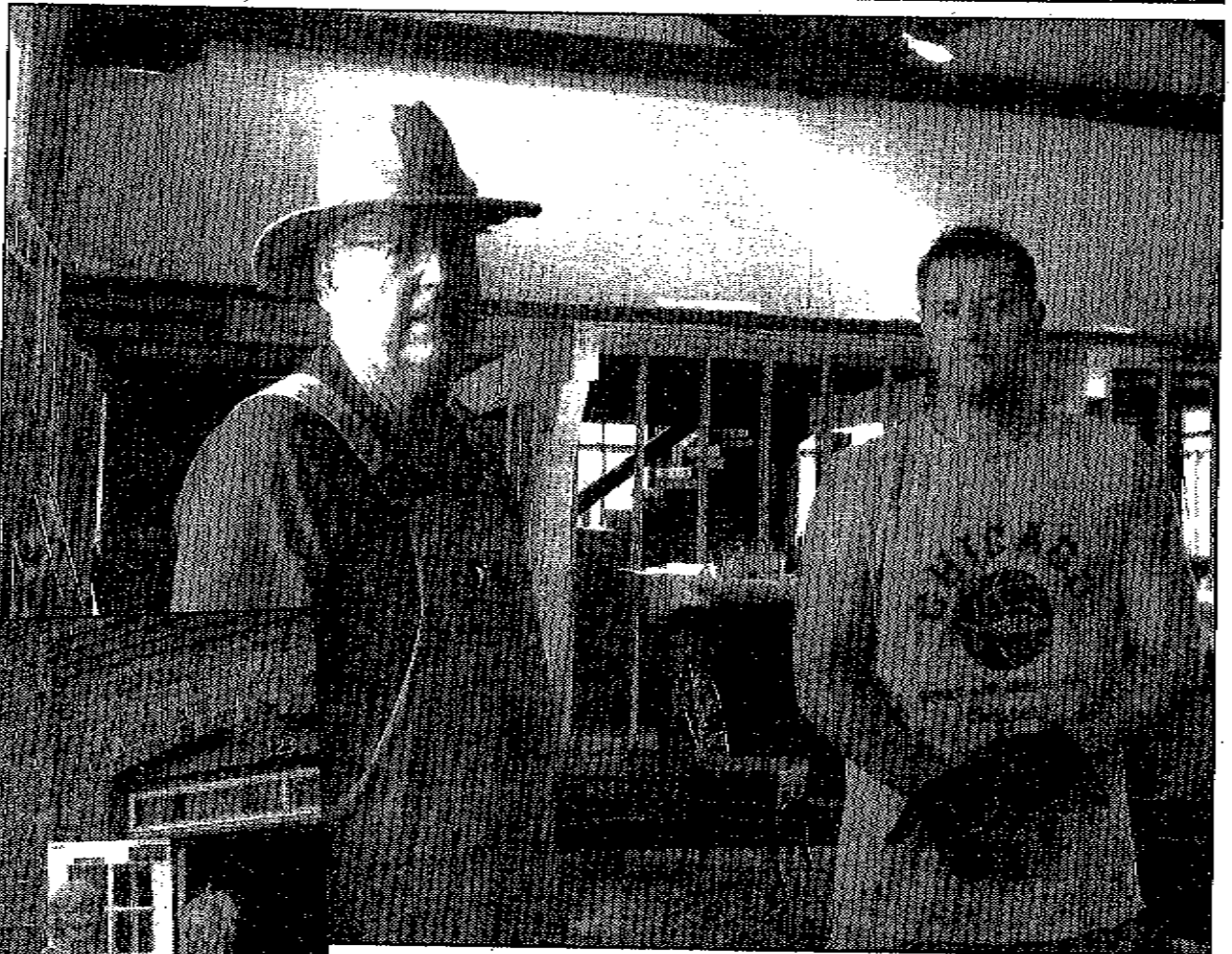
"I want to preserve the character of the old building, restoring the outside as much as possible to the way it looked when it was a freight depot," says Richard Riley, who describes himself as a "rail fan," which is someone who likes trains and train memorabilia.

His wife, Ann, laughs. "Yes, he definitely likes trains. We have trains running through the garden at our home in Illinois and we're going to have trains here, running along the walls."

The trains in the garden are "G-scale" for garden railroading, and able to take the conditions of weather outside. The set up at the Riley home in Illinois is so well-done and so elaborate that the Garden Railroad Convention has made the Riley home a stop on their annual conventions for several years. Soon, they may have to make the trip out to Chesterton since Riley plans to mount a train system high up, along the walls of the interior of the Bed & Breakfast so that his trains literally travel around the old depot.

Surprisingly, Riley never worked for a railroad, nor are there any trainmen in his family. He got interested in trains through his father's hobby of collecting old railroad memorabilia that had been modified with customized handles.

This led to Riley collecting railroad memorabilia, which led to the scale model train set that led to the dream of a restaurant.



TOP: Richard Riley and his son, Chris, work inside the depot, shifting old wood and moving windows as they work to make the inside liveable.

LEFT: Ann Riley and Jennifer Brdecka, Chris' girlfriend, pose on the large deck surrounding the outside of the old freight depot. The Rileys haven't decided on the design of the porch for their new Bed & Breakfast.

"It all makes sense," the Rileys laugh.

"My daughter was here in town and she saw this depot standing empty and she told Richard that it was for sale," explains Ann. "Richard was thrilled."

And so it began, with the Rileys buying the building, planning the new structure and preparing the plans to build it.

"open", with the kitchen fixtures against the wall on one side. The rest of the large open space will contain a dining area and comfortable couches and chairs. Plans include a fireplace for cozy winter nights and the Rileys are finally getting to use the place plans they've had stored away for years.

along the walls."

The trains in the garden are "G-scale" for garden railroading, and able to take the conditions of weather outside. The set up at the Riley home in Illinois is so well-done and so elaborate that the Garden Railroad Convention has made the Riley home a stop on their annual conventions for several years. Soon, they may have to make the trip out to Chesterton since Riley plans to mount a train system high up, along the walls of the interior of the Bed & Breakfast so that his trains literally, travel around the old depot.

Surprisingly, Riley never worked for a railroad, nor are there any trainmen in his family. He got interested in trains through his father's hobby of collecting old railroad lanterns that had been modified with customized handles.

This led to Riley collecting railroad oil cans, which led to the scale model train set-ups, which led to the depot in Chesterton.



TOP: Richard Riley and his son, Chris, work inside the depot, shifting old wood and moving windows as they work to make the inside liveable.

LEFT: Ann Riley and Jennifer Brdecka, Chris' girlfriend, pose on the large deck surrounding the outside of the old freight depot. The Riley's haven't decided on the design of the porch for their new Bed & Breakfast.

Photos by Lee Lyons

"It all makes sense," the Riley's laugh.

"My daughter was here in town and she saw this depot standing empty and she told Richard that it was for sale," explains Ann. "Richard was thrilled."

And so it began, with the Riley's buying the building almost two years ago and making plans to restore it and modify the interior to accommodate a two-bedroom Bed and Breakfast on one end and living quarters and an office for themselves on the other. The middle section of the depot will remain

"open", with the kitchen fixtures against the wall on one side. The rest of the large open space will contain a dining area and comfortable couches and chairs. Plans include a fireplace for cozy winter nights and the Riley's are finally getting to use the player piano they've had stored away for years.

All of the plans aren't solidified yet, but that's half the fun, according to the Rileys: trying out new ideas, investigating decorating possibilities and

continued on page 6

## the chronicle

HOBART - VOLUME V • ISSUE 46

PORTAGE - VOLUME V • ISSUE 46

VALPARAISO/CHESTERTON - VOLUME V • ISSUE 14

Published at

208 Elm Street, Valparaiso, Indiana 46383

by Great Lakes Media, Inc.;

Entered as periodicals at Portage, Indiana.

**Advertising Deadline:**

Noon every Friday before Wednesday publication.

**Classified Deadline:**

Noon every Thursday before Wednesday publication.

Copyright 2008. All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reprinted or otherwise reproduced without express written permission.

Publisher	Brenda Kleihege
Managing Editor	Deb Johnson
Advertising Director	Evelyne Y. Dacey
Agency/Homes Rep.	Tom Sanders
Advertising Designer/Contributor	Nancy Costello
Contributor	Jessica Cochran
Contributor	Lee Lyons
Contributor	Neal F. Litherland
Contributor	Cecil Messer
Production	Mary R. Hoskins
Classified	Abby Holstein

asera care hospice

The Promise of Dignity

With more than a decade in service, AseraCare Hospice is dedicated to providing a gentle, holistic approach at the end of life.

At AseraCare, it is our privilege, our duty and our commitment to serve our patients and their families with respect dignity.

*This is our life's work. This is our promise.*

332 West U.S. Highway 30, Suite E  
Valparaiso, IN

219-462-6398 • 866-902-8892

Fax: 219-531-0869 • www.aseracare.com

AseraCare welcomes all persons in need of its services and does not discriminate on the basis of age, disability, race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex or source of payment. AHS-00494-07



**Fresh Hawaiian Fish**  
Available Daily

## PORTAGE 16 IMAX

Liberty Portage/Valparaiso/Chesterton

**QUALITY THEATERS**

219-761-SHOW  
Online Ticketing  
www.GQT.com  
Rt. 9 @ Airport Rd.  
2 Miles West, Ft. 168

### NORTHERN INDIANA'S BEST MOVIE DEAL

All Digital Sound • Fun Spacious Lobby  
All Superb Recliner Seats

**\$5.00** BANGOR TWILIGHT  
DALEY 4:00-8:00 PM

**\$6.50** STUDENTS  
all shows, all seats

Free drink refills & 23¢ extra refills

SHOWTIMES 8:20 - 8:21 No parking

**MISS SUMMER MOVIES!**

Every Monday thru Friday 10:30-12:30 am  
8:20-8:21

**\$1 ALL BEARS** HORTON HEARS AWHO IWS

11:00-11:00  
with Warren Butler, Peter Sorenson,  
and Dave Walker  
Tickets: 2:21 7:00 8:21

**CIRQUE DU SOLEIL: DELIRIUM**  
Wed. & Thurs. 7:00 PM

**STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS**  
(PG) 11:15, 11:45, 1:45, 2:15, 4:15,  
6:45, 8:45, 9:15, 9:45

**COMBROS (R)**

11:20, 2:00, 4:30, 7:00, 9:15

**ONLY ME TO THE MOON 3D (G)**

11:30, 1:30, 4:15, 7:00

**BRIDESHEAD REVISITED (PG-13)**

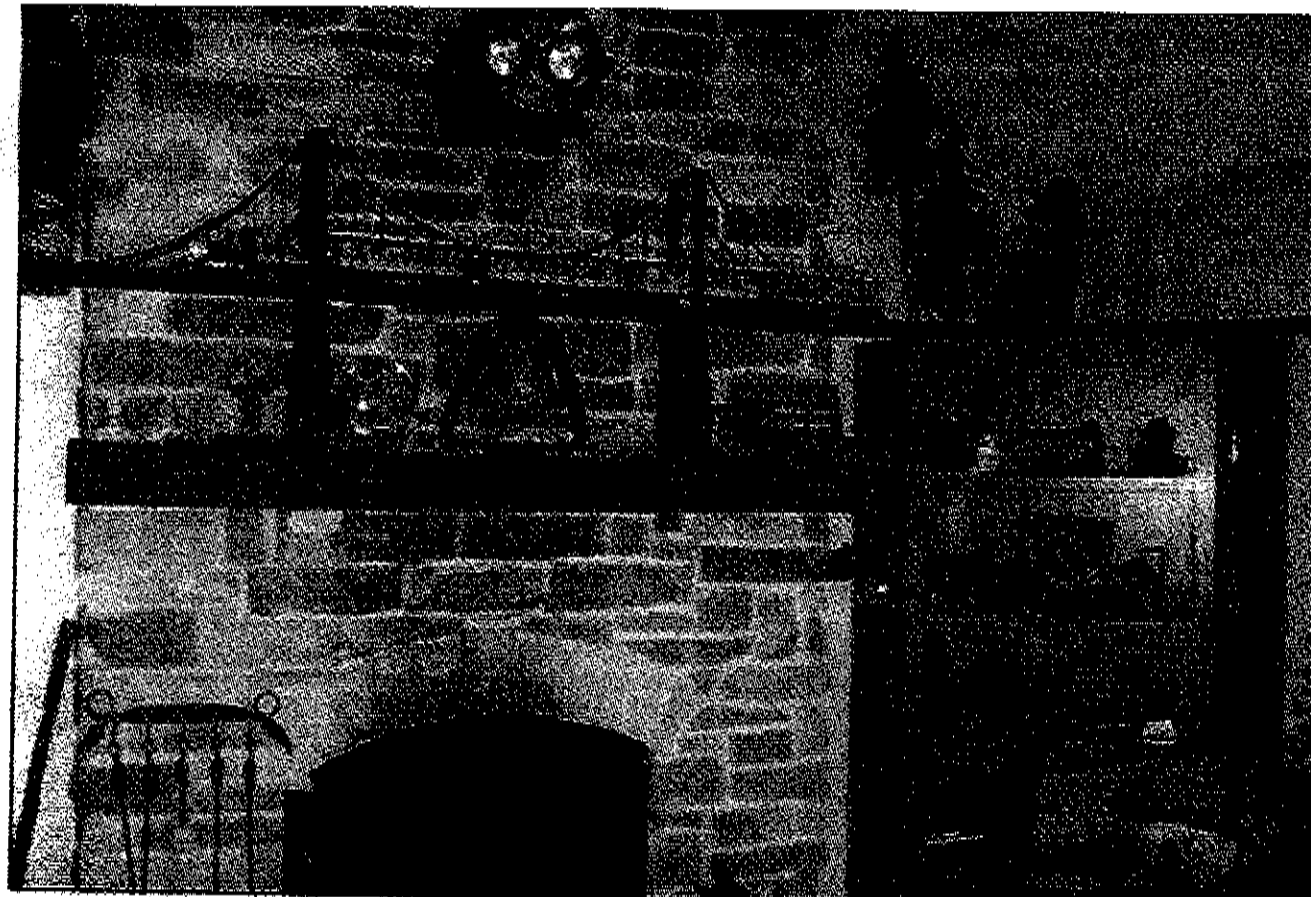
12:50, 3:50, 6:50, 9:50

**TROPIC THUNDER (R)**

10:40, 11:40, 1:20, 2:20, 4:00, 5:00,  
6:00, 7:10, 8:20, 9:15

**CYTHE SISTERHOOD OF THE TRAVELING PANTS 2 (R) (M) (10:30)**

11:15, 1:30, 7:00, 9:50



Trains circle the family room in the home of train enthusiast Richard Riley. Riley plans to do something similar with the decor at the Bed and Breakfast. Photo provided.

by Jessica Cochran

**HOBART** – With an airborne combat me high school sweetheart

“He proposed to still in Iraq,” Aman that he was making our families so we the video was his p our families to be a part of it.”

At the end of the video proposal, Hughes mother pulled the engagement ring out her pocket and handed it to her future daughter-in-law.

Tears poured down Adkins cheeks as she accepted the diamond ring.

“At that moment, I could think about what I wish I could kiss him,” she said.

To Hughes and Adkins’ “sweethearts” defined Hobart High School dating their freshman finish their senior year each other after graduation.

Now, Hughes is in finishing her degree at Ivy Tech, and the two live together.

“I didn’t know (in 1 to get married, but I

The “big day” is set. “We had to pick a date his military schedule only time that he had won’t have to rush through our date for the wedding if the military decide from what he already

Hughes, part of the U.S. Army, recently returned from deployment in Baghdad

architectural features, spending time in the old building and soaking up its vibrations and what it would be like to live in it.

So far, it may be something of a retreat but it hasn’t been a vacation. The Rileys spent most of last year and the winter hand-digging out a basement below the depot for plumbing and electrical conduit.

Hand-digging? “Yes, all by hand” Richard says with a certain glee at the achievement. His wife and son Chris and Chris’ girlfriend, Jennifer Brdecka, nod their heads emphatically. “All winter,” they agree, sharing his sense of accomplishment.

Next to the basement, cleaning up the debris from years of disuse and neglect has been the biggest challenge. They’ve filled six giant-sized dumpsters so far, but have kept as much of the original wood and architectural features as possible. They’ve also added several new windows into the second floor loft space and are opening up part of the mainfloor wall to windows as well.

Hired workers have been putting in dormer windows all summer, while the family members come out on weekends to work on the interior. The building is beginning to take shape.

“According to the inscription on the wall, the depot was built in 1917,” Riley says. “It was always a freight depot, not a passenger depot. In the late 1920s and ‘30s lofts were added to store smaller packages.

We’re using the loft space on either end for bedrooms.”

“It will be a welcoming center for rail fans,” Richard hopes. “A weekend place for people who love trains and love this area and the dunes.”

Ann Riley is a big fan of the dunes and anxious to have a second home in the area and a place to escape after working all week in downtown Chicago. Richard, who is an attorney specializing in consulting work for the wireless and broadcast industries, is already doing some work locally and looks forward to spending some of his time in the office-to-be, doing work on local projects.

“I do some zoning and permitting work, land use, and siting,” Riley explains, “some of which had to be done in order to get the depot re-zoned for a Bed and Breakfast.”

“The Building Department and the town of Chesterton have been very supportive and very helpful. They’ve done ‘little things’ that have made the project do-able and that’s important. We feel that they’ve welcomed us to the area and encouraged our project. We plan to be good neighbors.”

Riley summarizes. “We’re going to enjoy being here.”

The Rileys hope to have the major work completed sometime next year, maybe as early as the spring. They consider the building’s address, 123 Fourth Street, as a lucky sign, and encourage people to drive by and take a closer look as the old freight depot undergoes its transformation.

