

## **History of Benjamin Ellis House Bed & Breakfast**

**Original House Completed 1853** – Benjamin Ellis and wife Eliza purchased a derelict lot at 215 Pollock Street in early 1850's. The original house, which began as a Two & Two – two rooms down stairs and two rooms upstairs with a center hallway and staircase, was completed in 1853. A separate smoke house and kitchen were also built on the property at that time.

Benjamin Ellis was a successful turpentine merchant and savvy businessman. He owned a turpentine distillery located on South Front Street and a Steam Sawmill. He and Eliza had five children, three of whom lived to adulthood.

**House Occupied 1862-65** – Following the battle of New Bern the house was occupied by Union soldiers as was much of Pollock Street. Company K out of Massachusetts occupied the home until 1865. After the occupation, the family built onto the house adding additional rooms on the East side. The house was further expanded on the East side in the 1880's.

**Converted to Two-Family Dwelling 1904** – After the death of Eliza Ellis in 1899 the house passed onto the children (Benjamin died in 1868). Folklore has it there was a falling out between the brother and brother-in-law. They didn't get along and couldn't agree on a price to buy each other out. So, they simply split the house in half and moved one side to the west nine feet, adding a second hallway, stairwell and front door. The house became a two-family dwelling in 1904. At that time, the additional rooms were also added to the West side expanding the footprint of the building to over 7500 sq ft which still remains to this day.

Locals will tell you the two siblings lived side by side never speaking for over 20 years but that claim is hard to verify. The house left the Ellis family sometime in the late 1920's and after that it is not clear exactly what happened to the house or how it was used. Apparently, a gift shop was housed in what is now the Parlor for many years. There were offices in the rooms on the ground floor and apartments in the rooms on the second floor for some time.

**Opened as Bed & Breakfast 1985** - In the early 1980's a couple (the Hansens) purchased the house with intent to turn it into a Bed & Breakfast. After several years of renovation, they opened the Harmony House Inn Bed & Breakfast in 1985. They named it Harmony House to return 'harmony' to the house after years of discord. It may also be due to the fact Mr. Hansen was part of a men's singing group.

**Named Changed 2018** - the third set of Innkeepers, Gretchen & Tracy Du Peza, bought the Inn in 2016 with hopes to restore some of the former beauty and highlight more of the history of the house. Initial renovation projects expanded the dining room, added a full commercial kitchen and created a guest powder room. The wood floors in the Parlor, Dining Room and Foyer were refinished and rooms re-painted. New artwork, linens and furniture placement has spruced up Guest rooms. The exterior of the Inn received a fresh look with new paint colors and restored front porch columns. Following Hurricane Florence, the sign for the Inn was in bad repair and needed to be replaced. At that time, the couple

decided to update the name of the Inn to Benjamin Ellis House Bed and Breakfast to better reflect the history of the house and to honor Benjamin Ellis who built the house in 1853.

**About the Inn** - Benjamin Ellis House Bed & Breakfast has nine guest rooms – four Queen rooms, two standard King rooms, two luxury King suites and one room formerly with twin beds, currently used as a den and work room. All rooms have private bathrooms with luxury amenities. Guest rooms also feature individual climate controls, work spaces, smart TVs, USB charging stations for tablets or smart phones, seating areas and closet or hanging spaces. In addition to the formal parlor and dining room, guests may enjoy relaxing in the cozy reading nook, playing cards or other games at the game table, sharing conversation with other guests in the upstairs seating area or relaxing on the front porch watching passersby strolling down Pollock Street.

Guest services include concierge assistance, full breakfast each morning, 24 hour access to hot or cold beverages and snacks. In addition to a full breakfast for guests each day the Inn also offers services for guests and the general public with advance reservations such as: candlelight dinners, cooking classes, walking tours, event space & catered meals. Other special events offered at the Inn may include Mother's Day Tea, Easter Brunch, Swiss National Day fest, Thanksgiving Dinner and Christmas Dinner. Call for more information about special events and services.