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Thriving on the Green

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PENDLETON — It's not that she's been in business for 183 years, but the space her restaurant occupies has been a centerpiece in Pendleton Square for precisely that long.

Lorett Hayes had more anxiety a year ago than she does now, since her new restaurant, 1826 on the Green, has become a big hit in and around the town as it nears its one year anniversary.

Originally dubbed Farmer's Hall, the building is just one of the attributes that gives "historic" Pendleton its rich and telling name.

Built in 1826, its large white and ribbed pillars tower over the brick patio, as red umbrellas provide additional shade to the mammoth Oak trees that filter the sunlight. Visitors who opt to dine inside will experience a casual atmosphere, peppered with metropolitan pops and Southern comfort, outlined in the design and the food, Hayes said.

"This is an historic place, no doubt about it, but we wanted it to feel modern too," she said. "The name 1826 really stuck with me. This place will always be Farmer's Hall, but I felt like it needed a new identity."

Hayes, who was the general manager at a hotel in St. Louis, had never really made a life in food service until she married and moved to South Carolina.

"My husband and I met while he was on business in St. Louis, living in my hotel," she said. "He is a native South Carolina guy, so we moved to Central in 1986."

While living in Central, Hayes owned and operated an antique shop downtown. The store, however, was something she described as a little too soon for the area, and she closed up shop. From there, the pair opened an old-time soda fountain and ice cream shop called Serendipity, a word coined to describe unexpected enjoyment.

"My husband wanted to open with just hot dogs and do the ice cream thing," she said. "I thought it needed more, with sandwiches and the like. So, a week into it, I started cooking there. It was fantastic."

Hayes eventually sold off her Central operation and took over at the Liberty Hall Inn, in Pendleton. After establishing a strong customer base, Hayes sold the property in 2004.

"I always told myself that if Farmer's Hall ever became available, I really wanted a chance to take it over," she said.

After plenty of planning and interviewing with the Farmer's Society that owns Farmer's Hall, Hayes was picked to acquire a five-year lease. With the granting, she opened her new venture as 1826 on the Green, located inside Farmer's Hall.

She is the sole cook in front of the burners, and her constant specials are a product of her own tasty experiments and brainstorming.

"I've never had formal training in being a chef," she said. "It's always been a natural thing for me. Just like riding a horse, the more you do it, the better you get."

Following her many years of overseeing private parties and banquets while managing hotels, not to mention having fun with her friends, Hayes found a love for entertaining.

"I was able to work and study under a well-known culinary chef before where I learned a lot," she said. "But it's a true passion of mine. You'll taste the same food with the same quality each time you come in, because no one is in that kitchen cooking, except me."

The lunch crowd at 1826 will tell you the same thing, as Hayes promises a timely lunch for those who are on a specific schedule.

Dinner is no different, as Hayes whips up a scrumptious crab cake and a rack of ribs that will take the cake over the rest. Speaking of cake, her desserts are a great way to end the night, she said.

"We're simple and we're tasty," she said. "We offer comfort in our restaurant and good food on the plate."

And with each special that Hayes conjures up, she has her wait staff do a nightly tasting.

"That way, they can really describe what the dish is all about," she said. "There is no better compliment than coming back to a table with empty plates."

Lunch is served on Wednesday–Friday from 11:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m., dinner is served on Wednesday–Saturday from 4 p.m.–8:30 p.m. and happy hour is from 4 p.m.–6:30 p.m. on Wednesday–Saturday.

Call (864) 646-5500 for more information. 1826 on the Green is located in Pendleton Square.



Special to the Daily Journal/Messenger

1826 on the Green in Pendleton is well known for its outside dining atmosphere and delicious menu from Lorett Hayes, owner and chef.