

## For sweepstakes winner, destination Lynchburg

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*Editor's note: This is the second in a series on national contests and Central Virginia*

Lynchburg is a nice place to live, but you wouldn't want to visit there.

That's what they used to say anyway, but apparently that's changed. According to Pam Gentile of Cotton Incorporated (the "Fabric Of Our Lives" people), a whole lot of people want to see our city now.

Earlier this year, Cotton Incorporated, Hallmark Magazine and the Virginia Department of Tourism put their heads together for a sweepstakes, and the first prize is (the envelope, please) a weekend ... here.

The package includes "round-trip coach airfare for two; round-trip transfer from the airport in Lynchburg to the Carriage House Bed and Breakfast; a three-night stay for two people at the Carriage House in Lynchburg, Virginia; a three-course daily breakfast and afternoon snacks; biking, canoeing and a picnic lunch."

And, of course, "two 100-percent natural cotton sweatshirts."

Dinner at the Texas Inn was not included.

The contest, which ended Friday, was open to all Americans, unless they were

unlucky enough to live in Rhode Island (I'm not sure why Rhode Island was excluded). And this was the Web site pitch, next to a nice photo of the Carriage House Inn Bed and Breakfast on Cabell Street.

Wear cotton, the fabric Mother Nature grows herself, and reconnect with nature in the rolling hills of Lynchburg, Virginia. Nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains, Lynchburg provides the perfect getaway to reconnect with all things natural and historic. Stay at the Carriage House Inn Bed and Breakfast - an elegant, authentically restored 1878 Italianate Mansion, and you'll experience the past as if it were yesterday. Prize includes two 100-percent natural cotton sweatshirts from TheFabricofOurLives.com - perfect for biking along picturesque nature trails, canoeing along the James River, enjoying a picnic lunch after hiking the Blue Ridge Mountains and going out in the evening!"

OK, we're not exactly in the Blue Ridge Mountains, but they aren't that far away. I don't want to nitpick.

"So," I asked Ms. Gentile, "how many entries have you gotten?"

I figured, maybe, a few hundred. By stretching my imagination to its limits, I could perhaps envision 1,000.

"The Sweepstakes has already brought in

over 55,000 entries," she replied in an e-mail, "and it still has a week to go."

Mind-boggling. The city's population is only a bit over 65,000.

"It's about time somebody recognized Lynchburg," said Carriage House Inn Bed and Breakfast owner Kathy Bedsworth (and isn't that a great name for someone running a bed and breakfast).

She and her husband Mike opened the Carriage House Inn Bed and Breakfast to the public last September, but that came only after more than four years of commuting from Northern Virginia on weekends to work on the restoration.

The house was built in 1878 by Richard Thomas Watts, a Civil War veteran (the Yankees shot his horse out from under him and took him prisoner) and brother-in-law of George Jones of Jones Library fame. The two started a hardware store, Jones, Watts & Co., which eventually became Bell, Barker & Jennings. Moreover — and Pam Gentile would like this - Watts served for a time as director of the Lynchburg Cotton Mill.

Apparently his business instincts were keen, because when Watts died in 1910, his total estate was worth over \$900,000 - more than \$19 million in 21st century money.

The house was passed down through

various family members until it was eventually turned into apartments in the 1980s. Somehow, though, this Daniel's Hill survivor managed to cross the threshold of its second century with much of its structural integrity and original artifacts intact.

It was the Virginia Department of Tourism, Pam Gentile said, that selected the Carriage House Inn when the cotton folks came looking for a bed & breakfast against which to prop their sweepstakes.

"They wanted a 'green' B&B," explained Kathy Bedsworth, "and one that was woman-owned."

This limited the field considerably. "We replaced most of our light bulbs with energy-saving bulbs," Bedsworth said. "We do a lot of recycling, we compost food waste, and we're about to pull the trigger on recycling rainwater."

The Bedsworths also practice "optional linen service" - which means they won't change your sheets every day unless you ask them to.

For the sweepstakes winners, though, they'd probably be willing to change them every hour.

Bring 'em on!

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