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Alumni Profile

Restoration on the river

Driving on Highway 100, you could pass through the river town of New Haven, Mo., in about three minutes. To the layperson, it looks like many small Midwestern towns — a bank, some schools, a market and a smattering of residences. But it's bigger — and more charming — than first impressions allow. For Ellen and Mark Zobrist, it's home. It's historic. And it needs to be preserved.

[Adobe Flash version 8, or higher, and Java Script are required to view the slide show for this feature story.](#)

“Ellen is a New Haven native,” says Mark, BA '76. “Her family has lived here for generations.” Meanwhile, Ellen, BS '76, quips: “Mark is a newcomer. He's only been here 30 years.”

Together, the two have made their mark on the community (population 2,029) by purchasing, restoring and renovating a number of abandoned or dilapidated structures, including a 1939 movie theater, several homes built in the 1800s and the five-bedroom [Central Hotel](#), which they reopened in 2004.

The hotel, situated on a bluff overlooking the Missouri River, was originally built in 1879 and closed in 1937. The restored structure maintains the building's original footprint and windows, and it features some original woodwork. The rooms are furnished with antiques, many of which were passed down through generations of Ellen's family. Now, the hotel attracts visitors primarily because of its proximity to a number of Missouri wineries — New Haven is only 15 minutes from Hermann, Mo., home to popular May and October wine festivals.

“We knew we were going to live in New Haven forever, and we saw so much potential,” Mark says.

“I think we're preservationists at heart,” Ellen continues. “It's a joy to see the old buildings flourishing again.”

— Sarah Garber

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