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The name Vrooman is familiar to many students, but most are likely unaware of the impact the family made upon the community. The Vrooman Mansion brings light to the family and their contribution to ISU and even provides a place to stay the night.

The Vrooman Mansion, located on Taylor Street in Bloomington, was built in 1864 and throughout the years has been transformed into what is now a bed and breakfast.

Robin Lyman, innkeeper at the mansion, explains that Eli Barber was the original builder, but he did not want to keep it because his wife passed before it was done being built. The first to occupy the home was Matthew T. Scott, who married Julia Green, whose sister Letitia was married to Adlai Stevenson.

The Scotts had three children – a son that passed as an infant and two daughters, which Lyman explained is “where it gets tricky, because their names were Julia and Letitia as well.”

The house was originally built with 17 rooms, but in the early 1900s, 18 rooms were added to make it a total of 35 rooms. Julia Green sold the house to her daughter, who later studied abroad and met Carl Vrooman.

Carl and Julia Vrooman called the Vrooman Mansion home, and their history there was lifelong, Lyman explained.

“Julia was born, [in] the same room that she passed in. Julia lived to be 105 years old, and at that time they auctioned off the house for $80,000,” Lyman said.

According to Jenna Self, archives assistant of ISU, “[Carl] Vrooman has been closely associated with many of the top political figures since the beginning of World War I. In addition to serving as assistant secretary of agriculture, he was also a special envoy of the President of France.”

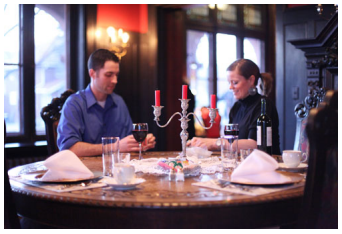
The Vroomans have resided in Bloomington since 1894. Vrooman was from Kansas, and since he lived in the central Illinois area, he managed about 4,000 acres of farmland for over 50 years.

Carl and Julia Vrooman also traveled extensively.

“In years past, they lived in Washington, England, Egypt, France, and Italy,” Self said.

The Vrooman Mansion was turned into a bed and breakfast in 1981, and the current owners Pam and Dana Kowalewski, who have owned it for 11 years, have kept it that way.

The Vrooman Center, located in Manchester-Hewett dorms, was originally opened as a dining center in 1966, but after remodeling the dorm halls, it is now the tutoring center.



Lyman said that the reason the tutoring center is named after Julia Vrooman is because she made a fiscal donation to the school. Vrooman has been known to always show concern for the less fortunate by donating to charities, churches, and the needy.

Today, the mansion is mostly left untouched, full of antiques from the 1800s. Guests can choose from five rooms to stay in, with the remaining rooms used for storage.

Lyman said the stay is “very unique because of its hospitality. We are also competitively priced and have a gourmet breakfast that is popular.”

Of the five rooms available to stay in, Lyman said the most popular is the Carl Vrooman Suite, which is a three-room suite with a private bathroom and large picture window.

The Vrooman Mansion is not only a bed and breakfast, but also a place to host a variety of events. They have hosted weddings, baby showers, dinner parties, family reunions, and more.

Vrooman and his wife had clearly made their impact in the Bloomington-Normal area. They both had a life full of accomplishments.

The Vroomans’ lives will forever be honored here in Bloomington-Normal, as they have allowed the mansion to carry on their legacy with the upkeep of a wonderful home and have given ISU students a chance to attend the Julia N. Visor Center in pursuit of academic success.