

Former student pursues childhood dream

Former FC student Bryce Romig serves local tourist site Culbertson Mansion as event coordinator and tour guide

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The large 23-karat gold ceiling in the main entrance hallway of the mansion previously belonging to William Culbertson's family holds a long 150 years of history, from housing a wealthy family to becoming a touring site like today. The Culbertson Mansion has invited thousands of children for school field trips throughout the years, inspiring many of them to this day.

"We've had field trip kids that came for their third grade field trip and then brought their sister back, brought their uncle back, brought their grandparents

back, I mean they keep coming back," said Culbertson Mansion program developer Kaitlyn Tisdale. "We've had one child [that] came back five times with different relatives each time, because he loved it so much and wanted to share it with them, and that's when we know we're doing something right."

The mansion itself has intrigued others, but the family that previously lived there creates an example for others to follow, with their hospitality and kindness towards everyone they met when they were alive.

"It's a home, we should be welcoming to people who come see it, just like the Culbertsons

would have been when they took people to their parlors," said event coordinator Bryce Romig, a 2014 FC graduate.

Though children visit the mansion often, a wide variety of others visit the mansion, too.

"My favorite thing about giving tours here is honestly the range of people that you meet," said Tisdale. "It's never people just from Indiana, it's never just one age group. We get people from all around the world. It is so fun to get to know these people."

Because of his son's job at the Culbertson Mansion, English teacher Tim Romig has also learned a lot about the mansion.

Specifically, he knows about the spirits supposedly inhabiting the home.

"[The Culbertsons] had a servant, the first floor servant, who was the one

that let everybody in and had most contact with the public. When she died, they had her funeral in the parlor on the first floor, which was very odd for a millionaire person to have their servant's funeral, that's how valuable she was," said Mr. Romig. "Supposedly, she still haunts the place. People report seeing a gray-haired lady on the third floor and that's where the servants lived, and they think it's this servant."

Interests from childhood can stem into various career paths. Bryce had an interest in the Victorian era, which inspired him to work at a historical site such as the Culbertson Mansion.

"I can remember as a young boy I would get books from the library that were talking about haunted houses, or just Victorian houses, and I would try to draw my own Victorian house because I've always wanted one so bad," said Bryce.

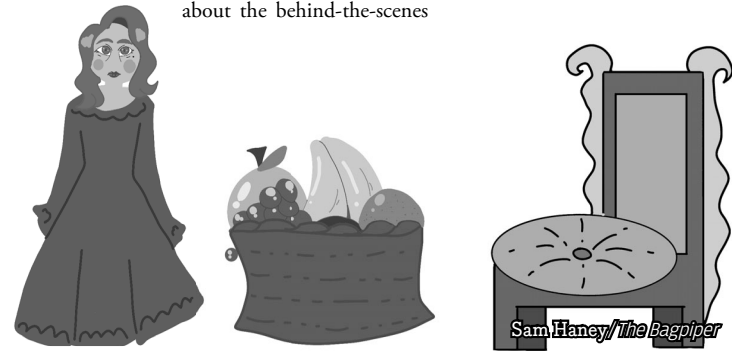
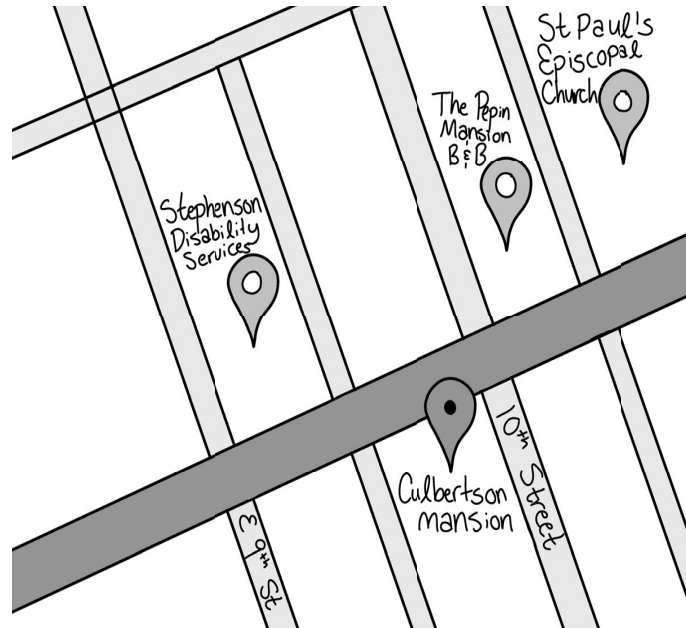
In working at a historical site, one's perspective about the Culbertson Mansion can change drastically. Tisdale learned about the behind-the-scenes

work at historical sites like the mansion.

"For me, what changed was realizing how much work goes into making a place like this run. You start working here and you think, 'Oh, okay, it's just giving tours every day.' No, you give tours, you clean the bathrooms, you sweep floors, you have to give field trips so you have to coordinate with the schools and with the other historic sites they go to," said Tisdale. "It's not something that can work without a very dedicated staff and [a] group of volunteers. We couldn't do it without our volunteers."

For most, the Culbertson family is what draws in others to visiting the mansion. Specifically, their kindness and financial influence illustrates what it means to be benevolent.

"You can throw a rock and hit a historical museum where the owner was a rich old white guy or a rich old white slave owner, and they were mean or they were ruthless and they hoarded their money away,



Sam Haney/The Bagpiper

To read an additional story on the history of the Culbertson Mansion, go to fchsbagpiper.wordpress.com.

but not here. The heart of this family is what gives me chills," said Tisdale.

The Culbertson Mansion has a way of catching the eyes of its visitors, which is no different from how Mr. Romig felt. He recalls the beauty of the mansion and the emotions he gets when he goes inside.

"I just thought in awe when I go in there. It's like it takes me back, and I just get so caught up," said Mr. Romig.

Bryce enjoys his job and, as Mr. Romig describes it, it's the perfect job for him. He always manages to find something new in the mansion, even after touring others through it so many times.

"The coolest part is even when you work here all the time, there's always something new to discover. I can go into any parlor upstairs and look in one corner and there's probably a corner or a design I've never seen before," said Bryce.

Working at the mansion impacts Tisdale significantly. She enjoys sharing the history and importance of the mansion with guests.

"It's special both ways. First, we get to see it and get to know that we're a part of that, we're a part of the mansion's history forever now, but it's also special in that you get to share it. We don't want to hoard it away," said Tisdale.

Even when the stress is high, the absolute beauty of the mansion is typically calming enough for staff members. Simply looking at all the unique furniture sets or admiring the history of the house can cheer up the workers at the mansion.

"When I have a really rough day, or I'm full of stress, or giving tours every hour, you sit down



FORMER STUDENT BRYCE ROMIG explains the history of some antiques in the Culbertson Mansion during a tour on Saturday, Sept. 7.

and you close your eyes, and you picture this office 150 years ago when it was the airing and ironing room for the laundry, and imagine the servants running around hustling and bustling in this house and above us," said Tisdale.

Mr. Romig wishes for other students to learn about the mansion and its history. He hopes for others to share an admiration for the mansion.

"I just hope other people appreciate it for what it is, you know, that kind of living history that's right there now that they restored back to what it probably originally looked like," said Mr. Romig.

Bryce reminisces his time at

FC and how challenging it was for him. Though it was difficult, however, he is thankful for the work expectation.

"It was strenuous, don't get me wrong, when I was going through it I did not like it a bit," said Bryce. "I remember when I went to college, I was literally laughing because it was easier than Floyd Central. I would have mountains of homework every night and a test every day," said Bryce.

Students are encouraged to get involved in the Culbertson Mansion if they can. Bryce said the mansion even offers volunteer opportunities to students younger than 18 as long as they have a signature

from a parent or guardian. Volunteers can help act for the murder mystery events that are often held at the mansion.

Though volunteers are needed, people are always welcome to take a tour and make donations to the mansion to be used for restoration. Students are also encouraged to participate in the haunted house event hosted at the Culbertson Mansion's carriage house.

"If you haven't been there, you should go and visit it and donate money. Every dollar counts there, that's how it gets funded. Most of the restoration they've done has been funded by that haunted house," said Mr. Romig.

Bryce hopes students can become tour guides in the future, as he enjoys his work and hopes to spread that love for history.

"You definitely have to have a passion for it. You always have to make sure that you put your best foot forward," said Bryce.

The Culbertsons were a family of prestige and hospitality, which motivates staff members within the mansion.

"Once you get into the family that was actually here, the life and blood of the house, you realize that they're just as amazing as what you're looking at," said Bryce. "It really brings [the] house to life because of the story written in the wall."