

Classic Resorting Returns to in the Style of Bay Pointe Inn

By Dianna Stampfler

Future guests and local residents are counting the days until the long-awaited Bay Pointe Inn & Restaurant will open its doors, bringing back to Gun Lake the style of resorting found here in the 1800s. The property offers an intimate and boutique feel, resembling communities such as Mackinac Island and Martha's Vineyard.

"In keeping with the traditional coastal flavor of summer cottages along the New England coast, as well as maintaining the legacy of entertainment from its past, the Bay Pointe Inn & Restaurant welcomes guests with a warm smile and comfortable accommodations, satisfies a desire for exquisite food and offers plenty of lakeshore pleasure," said Mike Powers, who owns the Inn with his wife Patti.

Bay Pointe Inn is located on four acres, nestled along 250-feet of Gun Lake shoreline. Many didn't expect a full-service resort to fit on the allotted space, but it does so gracefully. The 32,000 square-foot, smoke-free resort features a 40-room hotel with six suites, a 108-seat restaurant with a patio to accommodate another 85, an indoor pool, spa area, fitness center and a modest conference area – which converts to a movie theater at night for kids and families.

The Powers have lived at Gun Lake for 10 years and would frequently host Patti's extended family when they came for vacation. It often proved to be overcrowded at their home and the couple would question where they could house them all comfortably. It wasn't long after one of these family get-togethers that Mike and Patti came up with a brilliant idea.

"A year ago, Patti and I were sitting out on our boat looking up at the Bay Pointe mansion and said the area would be ideal for a hotel," Powers said. After acquiring the property, they poured their hearts and souls into building the upscale resort.

This is their first venture in the hospitality industry, yet they know how they like to be treated when they travel – and that will be the basis for how they do business. Mike will serve as general manager for the resort. Jenny Boerman will serve as assistant manager, utilizing her years of experience as a consultant in the travel industry. She has a bachelor's degree in business administration of tourism from Western Michigan University, making her a valuable member to the Bay Pointe team.

"Patti and I have high standards and have created a classic resort where that level of service is not only expected but is delivered," said Powers. "We've been personally involved in making sure that everything is perfect. From the pillows and window coverings, to the cabinets and furnishings, we want to give the experience that someone is at home when they're at Bay Pointe Inn."



The Charles and Elizabeth Morrell Resort once stood on the present day Bay Pointe property at Gun Lake.

Mary Collins from Custom Design Studio in Grand Rapids is the interior designer at Bay Pointe. She has been instrumental in selecting fabrics and coming up with design concepts to make each room unique and original.

"The rooms don't have the traditional hotel feel to them," Powers said. "From the color scheme to the window treatments and bedding, we're using custom-made fabrics and design elements."

Two Lakeside Ultimate Suites are located on the third floor, with vaulted ceilings, kitchenette with residential-style cabinets, walkout balcony, living area with a sleeper sofa, tri-view fireplace, Jacuzzi tub, two person shower, king size bed and flat screen TV. At just \$325 per night, these luxurious rooms offer a romantic escape. A standard south-side room runs just \$95 per night. Many of the rooms are connecting, offering expanded options for families. Continental breakfast is included on weekdays.

Guests and locals alike will enjoy the full-service landmark restaurant at Bay Pointe, which offers a casual, yet exquisite atmosphere.

Executive Chef John Kinzie, formerly of Butch's Dry Dock in Holland, has prepared a menu full of culinary delights. Among the items will be pan seared duck, tenderloin of beef, prime rib of pork with rhubarb ketchup, halibut, peppered tuna steak, whitefish and salmon. Chris Russo, formerly of Rose's in East Grand Rapids – a Gilmore Collection property – will serve as restaurant manager.

The main level of the restaurant features carpeting and tables, adjacent to the granite top bar and see-through fireplace. Along the lower level, booths skirt the arched perimeter atop a hardwood floor. A glass wall separates the two, allowing both light and privacy.

When weather permits, dining al fresco on the terrace offers breathtaking images of the lake and the islands. A second glass wall outside along the patio protects diners from the breeze, yet allows for unobstructed views.

Harder & Warner Landscaping of Caledonia have worked diligently to create the beautifully landscape grounds at Bay Pointe Inn, where 115 trees and 600 perennials have been planted. Manicured lawns and glorious gardens grace all sides of the building. They were even able to incorporate a



Architectural rendering of the new Bay Pointe Inn and Restaurant

100 year old wall from the original property into the design concept. Next year, when summer arrives, the air will be filled with the fragrance of roses and other flowers.

Beyond a private beach, a 10-slip dock welcomes transient boaters looking for dinner or drinks.

"We've arranged to have Matteson Marine deliver pontoons or other boats for rental by our guests," said Powers. Those looking for a boat ride, without all of the responsibility, can take advantage of such services as well. The Gun Lake Princess will stop at the end of the dock and pick up guests for excursions on the lake.

Among the other nearby attractions are Historic Bowen's Mills, Historic Charlton Park, Gilmore Car Museum, Flying Horseshoe Ranch, Yankee Springs State Recreation Area and YMCA Camp Manitou-Lin. The Gun Lake area features 20,000 acres of state parks, 13 miles of mountain bike trails, 16 miles of hiking trails and much more.

Whether it's a romantic get-away for two, a family vacation, a business trip or a special event, Bay Pointe Inn caters to all.

"We offer a venue for the smaller groups, from 10 to 100 people," Powers said. "Bay Pointe Inn is the perfect elegant, intimate setting for such events."

It's these types of small social gatherings that have been part of Gun Lake's history for more than 120 years.

Gun Lake's tourism history dates back to the late 1880s, when Charles and Elizabeth Morrell took in boarders and rented fishing boats from their farm-turned-resort on the present Bay Pointe property.

Around 1895, vacationers would come to the lake for five-day farmer's picnics, setting up camps and celebrating with music and square dancing. They would travel back and forth by steamboat to other Gun Lake resorts, offering romantic moonlight cruises. It was about this time that the resort property was sold to Edmund Noble, who owned it for just a short time before selling to Chicago residents Austin and Franklin Dwight in 1899.

The Dwight's enjoyed the quite solitude of the area, and found Gun Lake to be much more peaceful than their life in the Windy City. By 1902, they had moved to an old farm

house across the street and began building a grand summer home, to be known as Dwight Villa.

Completed in 1906, the two-and-one-half story home, in the Colonial Revival style, featured a full-length porch and a natural exterior of both cobblestone and wood shingles, with a massive fieldstone chimney stack. The home was built for entertaining. The Dwight's threw lavish parties and dances, creating an entertainment center for Gun Lake. With its sweeping lawns, curved driveway, glorious flowerbeds and landscaped grounds, the home was the gem of the area.

Over the years, the home and the property fell into disrepair, serving as a campground at one time before being renovated and opened as Bay Pointe Restaurant in 1983. In 1984, the architectural showpiece was named to the State and National Register of Historic Places. The building served as a restaurant and entertainment venue for nearly 20 years until it was purchased in by the Powers in 2003.

The Powers' set out to start a new chapter in the life of Bay Pointe. To make room for their elegant resort complex, the existing structure had to be taken down. A public auction drew thousands from Michigan and beyond, and piece by piece, the original building was carted away.

"From chandeliers, old pans, windows and stones from the foundation, we sold everything from the mansion. It was amazing. Everyone wanted a piece of Bay Pointe," Powers said. "There's an intrigue about this place. There always has been. Even during construction, people stopped in – by boat and by car – to see the project at its various stages."

The long-awaited opening of Bay Pointe Inn & Restaurant in October 2004 will bring new life to Gun Lake, creating a new chapter in an exciting history that will continue for generations to come.

Bay Pointe Inn & Restaurant
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