

Anhut to sell historic Botsford

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"This is our national landmark in the community," she said. "We would like to see someone to take it over who will keep this inn at its peak of perfection. We want to see it preserved."

"We've got a story to tell here, and the Botsford Inn is an important part of it."

Anhut is also concerned that the inn pass into caring hands. "Money is wonderful, but getting the right people is key," he added.

THE PROPERTY is listed through McNabney/Real Estate One Commercial of Bloomfield Hills. The

potential sale is being handled by investment specialist Lou Bogart, a Farmington Hills resident, who took on the listing seven months ago.

"It's a fascinating landmark, and he's (Anhut) a fascinating man," Bogart said.

Bogart said he has approached restaurant and catering companies, hotel owners and owners of other historic inns in Michigan and other states. He is also running ads in lodging and historical publications, hoping to get a bite. "We've had quite a few nibbles, but nothing very firm," he said.

The ideal buyer would be another family, or person with dreams of owning such a business, he added.

ANHUT'S DAILY involvement in the business has drawn regular customers, many with nostalgic feelings. Attorney Victor Hanson and his wife Laura visit daily.

"There's no place like it," Victor said, enjoying a mid-morning breakfast last week. "Here, John is on top of it. It's dedication to the work he's doing. He has a dedication to do the best job possible."

Laura Hanson thinks of the Botsford as a "home away from home."

"We lived in the inn for a year when we were waiting for our house. He keeps the place immaculate," she said. "He has his touch on every facet of the business."

Anhut became hooked on the hotel

and restaurant business nearly 50 years ago, after taking a job to support himself while attending law school. He has spent his life and career devoted to it.

"Everybody, cats, sleeps and drinks," he said, "and everybody is a potential customer. That's hard to give up."

If THE Inn doesn't sell, Anhut may hire a full-time manager to run it while he remains active with other property holdings and business dealings, he said.

"It's been good to us, and we've done well," he said, describing the end of an era. "I think we've been a credit to the community. We've shared in its profits and prosperity."

Old inn was more than just a tavern

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shining reminder that today is not all that the 1890s stand on the shoulders of the courage and fortitude, the staunch determination and the imagination of the men and women who built this state.

THE INN is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and the Michigan Registry of Historic Homes as well. It has been here as long as Michigan has been a state.

Built in 1835 by brothers Orrin and Allen Weston, the original Botsford Inn — then known as the Weston House — came into being shortly after President Andrew Jackson appointed a commission to plot a state-wide route from Detroit to the

mouth of the Grand River on Lake Michigan.

Local historians note that things began to boom and grow as the Westons started their stagecoach route from Detroit to Howell, and continued after they sold their business to Stephen Jennings in 1841.

When John Claugherty bought the business in 1849, other businesses grew up around it, prompting post office officials to drop the area "Clarencenville." Although it did not survive as a municipality, a school district in the area surrounding the Botsford Inn remains with the same name.

THE MAN for whom the inn was eventually named, Milton Botsford, came on the scene in 1860 as an ex-

perienced innkeeper. He got a post office reinstated in Clarencville and even served as the postmaster. The Botsford family held ownership of the inn for 64 years.

After years of courting his wife at dances and parties at the Botsford, Henry Ford I bought it in 1924. He did extensive restorations to the interior and exterior, added modern conveniences and furnished the inn with many antiques. Many mementoes of those days can be seen at the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village in Dearborn.

The Anhut family, headed by John Nicholson Anhut, bought the Botsford in 1951, three years after Henry Ford's death. Anhut acquired the inn from the Ford estate. Eventually, Anhut's son and current proprietor, John W. Anhut, took over the business.

The current innkeeper said he is considering writing a book about the nearly 40 years he has been involved with the historic inn and the people who have visited. "I have often thought about it," he said. "All the characters I've known..."

Owners of the Botsford Inn

Known by various names over the years, including the Weston House, the Plank Road House, the Sixteen Mile House and for the past 130 years, the Botsford Inn, this Farmington Hills landmark has had a number of owners.

- They include:
- 1835 — The Inn was built and operated by brothers Orrin and Allen Weston. The Weston family also established the first stagecoach line between Detroit and Howell.
- 1841 — Milford resident Stephen Jennings acquired the Inn.
- 1849 — John Claugherty bought the Inn, prompting the post office to dub the community "Clarencville."
- 1860 — Bought by the Botsford family, the Inn was first run

by Milton, then, after he died, by Frank in 1883. Their family name is retained on the landmark to this day.

• 1924 — The Inn was bought by auto mogul Henry Ford, who moved it back 200 feet from Grand River, and began restoring it. Ford's era of Botsford ownership included the Great Depression, when the Inn was closed for periods of up to 21 months, according to local historians.

• 1951 — The Anhut family bought the business. It was operated by John Anhut, Sr., and his son and namesake, who is the current innkeeper.

• 1989-90 — John Anhut seeks a buyer for the historic Inn — someone who has the same love of history and personal business savvy to keep the Inn special.

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Fatal accident probe continues

An investigation is continuing into a traffic accident in which a 52-year-old New Hudson man — a longtime employee of the Farmington Public Schools — was hit by a car and killed April 22 while riding his 10-speed bicycle near his home.

Police officials suspect alcohol was a factor in the incident.

Oakland County Sheriff's Department accident investigator Frank Willard said he is awaiting word on blood tests from the Michigan State Police crime lab in Lansing before any charges will be considered.

George Walters, 52, a maintenance employee with the Farmington schools, was killed shortly after 8 p.m. as he rode his bicycle along westbound Grand River in Lyon Township. A 1978 Chevrolet car, also traveling westbound, struck him from behind.

Walters was taken to Huron Valley Hospital where he later died. The driver of the car was not injured.

A 24-year-old Milford man was arrested at the scene, and released pending further investigation. A blood sample was taken from the man, Willard said.

Lab results are not expected until later this week.

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Tax-cut plan is cable topic

L. Brooks Patterson's presentation on the Patterson-Anderson Property Tax Cut Proposal will be aired in May on Metrovision cable Channel 12.

Air time will be 7 p.m. Friday, May 4; 2 p.m. Monday, May 7; 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 9; and 7 p.m. Friday, May 11.

The one-hour program was taped as Patterson addressed the Farmington Area Republican Club. Questions followed his presentation.

Petitioners seek to place the tax cut proposal on the November ballot.

Metrovision volunteers, led by Bob Carlson, videotaped Patterson's presentation as a community service.

Residents may request the program be aired on any Friday by calling Metrovision at 553-7303 (ask for Mary Conway in Community Access). By request, any Metrovision program can be so scheduled for additional viewing times.

Petitions must be returned by July 4 to Patterson. They may be obtained by calling the toll-free number, 1-800-BITE-TAX.

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