

Travel



T-6C, S-10C, 10C, F-12C, R.W.G-58(B, W) 17A

Reminders of a bygone era

Updated inn
unmatched
in sunrises



The Portage Point Inn is a rambling expanse of white clapboard, great pillars, porches and bright red geranium window boxes. The inn was built for wealthy turn-of-the-century passengers

who came by steamship and played croquet in long skirts and white flannel trousers on the lawns. Overlooking Portage Lake, the inn is a five-minute walk from Lake Michigan.

ONEKEMA, MICH. — The sun comes up in a late September mist over Portage Lake, backlighting the fishing boats and the docks in front of the Portage Point Inn.

The slap of water against the docks and the mutter of motors are the only sounds on the lake, except for an occasional exclamation from a fisherman as the coho salmon strike.

It has been too dark to see more than the outline of the turn-of-the-century buildings spread broadly across the shore and up the hill, but the sun is above the horizon now, spotlighting the white clapboard ramble of wood, the great pillars of the original hotel, the porches and rooftops of the Inn and Terrace, and the bright red geranium window boxes that decorate it all.

Most of the guests are still asleep, although a few have done their morning walk along the lake and up the road between Portage Point Inn cottages to Lake Michigan, five-minutes walk away.

All of these buildings were built for wealthy turn-of-the-century passengers who came by steamship and played croquet in long skirts and white flannel trousers on these lawns. The steamships have long gone and you must now detour off state Highways 22 or 31 as we did in our drive down the west coast of Michigan.

We left Traverse City with about a dozen people on a bus and another dozen in cars, all of us part of the 30th annual convention of the Society of American Travel Writers here in Michigan. Ten such groups left Traverse City the same day, to write stories about Michigan from sailboats and buses, campers and resort porches on both the upper and lower peninsulas. These writers have come to Michigan from all over the U.S. and Canada.

NO SENSIBLE vacationer would consider packing this much into four days, visiting artists and resorts up and down the Lake Michigan Coast, cruising around Saugatuck, visiting White Pine Village and the Gilmore Car Museum, fishing the Grand River and more. However, there is no other way to see even a small part of a big state like this.

I've been on convention with fellow members of SATW in many parts of the world — Poland, India, Hawaii, Bahamas — so it was a particular pleasure to bear them exclaim over a 1928 Chardonnay from the Chateau Grand Traverse winery, to watch the attentiveness and respect with which they met artist Gwen Frostie of Beulah.

Frostie is one of three remarkable women I met on that short stretch of Michigan coastline between the Leelanau Peninsula and Onekema. Mary Ann O'Neill of Birmingham, owner and chef of a wonderful tiny restaurant called La Becasse, in Burdickville, needs an entire story of her own, as does Michigan's own Gwen Frostie.

Today I would like you to meet Marilyn Luckman, the Director of Operations and the daily driving force behind the great white sprawl of wood known as the Portage Point Inn.

Marilyn and her husband, sculptor Stewart Luckman, have owned the Inn for the last two years. She has a love affair with the Portage Point Inn which is near where she lived for a year in nearby Manistee as a school girl. For many years she came back to work in the Inn for the summer, holding every job available on the premises at one time or another.

Luckman had earned several degrees and was a school principal in Minneapolis, Minn., when her brother telephoned one day from his home in North Dakota.

"THE INN is for sale," he said. "Let's buy it!"

Fall color show to debut

The curtain is going up on Michigan's fall color extravaganza for a six-week run staged for hikers, bikers, boaters, festival goers and, of course, motorists, reports AAA Michigan.

This year's autumn showcase begins in mid-September and early October in the Upper Peninsula and northern tip of lower Michigan. Tourists should wear brilliant hues of magenta, gold and orange from late September to mid-October south of Mackinaw City to north of a line from Ludington to Standish.

The best time for color viewing should be early and mid-October in the lower peninsula's midsection, south of a line from Ludington to Standish and north of a line from Holland to Port Huron. Fall color should peak in southern Michigan in mid- and late October.

FALL COLOR enthusiasts can choose traditional or off-beat ways to see the state's autumn beauty.

Among the most favored pastimes is touring the state by car. Motorists and hikers may wander through more than 8 million acres of state and national forest land to see vivid fall displays. Sugar maples turn brilliant golds and red maples are

noted for bright red leaves. Aspens are drenched in brilliant yellow while oaks become light brown to russet and sunac trees glow nearly iridescent red. Local parks and several scenic gardens in the state, such as Midland's Dow Gardens and Kalama-Soo's Nature Center, also are choice spots for color viewing.

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Marilyn Luckman worked every job at the Portage Point Inn as a girl. Years later she left a job as school principal in Minneapolis when her brother said, "The Inn is for sale. Let's buy it."

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