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Historic Mackinac Island Lodge Silver Birches Undergoing Renovations

By **CARLY SIMPSON** *on August 21, 2016*

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A three-story Adirondack lodge appears suddenly around the corner. Tucked behind a wrought iron fence amid birches and pines, it's surrounded by a quiet peacefulness on the north side of Mackinac Island.

The lodge, known as Silver Birches, was built in 1908 as a private residence. It was later used as a resort in the 1920s and early 1930s and became a youth summer camp around the 1950s.

Today, the property is owned by Liz Ware, who also works as the vice president of public relations for Mission Point Resort and is the daughter of Dennert and Suzanne Ware who purchased the resort in December 2014.

Photo of Mission Point Resort by Nicole Steffen

Liz first saw Silver Birches in 2013 while boating around the island. She immediately fell in love. “After we docked, I went straight to my bike and rode back to see the property,” she says.

Silver Birches sits off of M-185 within the forests of the Mackinac Island State Park, about four miles from downtown. The nearest house is over a mile away.

When Liz first visited, the roof was falling in on the main lodge, there were holes in the walls and floors, the porches were unstable. It was a long way from the luxury boutique hotel Liz imagined.

She bought it anyway.

The second and third floors of the main lodge had to be removed and rebuilt. The interiors of two cottages also located on the property were completely redone. One cottage was leaning 1.5 feet to the left. A 20-foot-deep, Olympic-sized cement pool—with trees growing in it—was removed from the backyard.

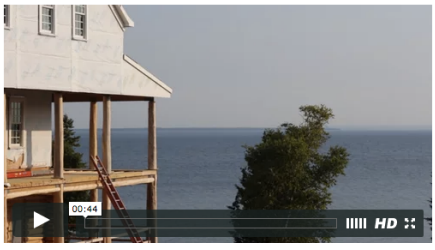
The work didn’t end there.

A 6-foot-deep, half-mile-long trench had to be dug for a new water pipe, and the support beams on the front porches, which offer stunning views of Lake Huron and the St. Martin islands, were replaced with steel poles wrapped in northern white cedar.

“What a lot of people don’t know is I lived at Silver Birches for two years during the early stages of the renovations,” Liz says. “It was important for me to understand the property; to know where the sun shines and the patterns of the lake. My kids, parents, friends and I had the most magical time there. We want to take that experience and give it to others.”

To do that, Liz has worked hard to keep as much of the original building as possible, even the squeaky wooden staircase leading up to the second floor. “It’s easier to tear things down than to redo them,” Liz says. “But we’re not going to cut any corners.”

See the renovations at Silver Birches during this MyNorth Media video.



The first phase of the renovation is scheduled to be completed by summer 2017. By then, 13 rooms will be available. The property can eventually accommodate up to 28 rooms, including gorgeous suites in the lodge and cottages. A commercial kitchen and restaurant in the lodge will provide guests and their visitors with a fine-dining experience. A new pool will soon be installed, and vegetable and herb gardens will be planted.

Though there is still plenty of work to do between now and the 2017 opening, Silver Birches is a far cry from its battered days standing alone on the shores of Lake Huron. The once abandoned site is alive with pounding hammers, swooshing paint brushes, and conversations about colors and countertops as it prepares to once again welcome visitors inside.