

# Mission Point Resort

A freshly polished, historic haven settled amidst the treasure that is Mackinac Island.

**I**t's early September and the Michigan summer sun is dripping its fiery colors over the horizon line. A breeze from Lake Huron tickles your cheek. You watch from the Bistro on the Green's deck as boats coast by, carrying sun-kissed passengers. You're lost in the beauty and splendor of this one-of-a-kind Victorian island paradise.

The waitress politely interrupts your thoughts to ask if you'd like another cold beverage. You tease your waitress, telling her that you don't have to drive; after all, you are vacationing on an island with no cars, and you're staying at one of the most charming resorts you've ever been to: Mission Point Resort. So you reply, "Yes, please, I'll have another."

## The birth of Mission Point Resort

Mackinac Island is positioned between Michigan's upper and lower peninsulas at the eastern end of the Straits of Mackinac. The island was once home to Native Americans before the Europeans ventured there. Rich and bountiful land provided abundant hunting and fishing for the natives.

The southeast end of Mackinac Island later became known as Mission Point. During the 1820s, Rev. William Ferry established Mission House, a place for Native American children to learn and live. Shortly after, he created Mission Church.

In 1954, the Moral Re-Armament (MRA) — a group that promoted purity, unselfishness, honesty and love — broke ground on what was to be their world conference center. One

of the historic features remaining at the resort today are the trusses in the resort's main lobby; they join together at 36 feet tall in a formation that appears to be a teepee. Several more buildings were built by the MRA, including the Straits Lodge, which is still part of Mission Point Resort today.

The land passed through many hands over the years: In 1966, the MRA gave much of its property to the Mackinac College; in 1970, it once again became a religious retreat; in 1977, it became a vacation destination and was renamed the Mackinac Hotel and Conference Center; and in 1987, it was sold and restored to its roots, taking the name Mission Point Resort.

Dennert and Suzanne Ware, a down-to-earth Texas couple, purchased the resort in 2014 and immediately began a renovation.

## The metamorphosis

Several million dollars of renovations have taken place at the 18-acre Mission Point Resort since 2015, with plans for continuous improvements. Liz Ware (the daughter of owners Dennert and Suzanne Ware) is overseeing the renovation. She has an extensive background in travel, hospitality, and meeting and convention planning.

The majority of the renovations take place during the winter months while the resort is closed, which creates a few obstacles as no cars are allowed on the island, materials must be transported by carriage and boat, and the lake can (and usually does) freeze.

Some of the renovations at the resort may not be visible to the guests who stay there, such as kitchen upgrades at several of the restaurants, infrastructure reinforcement and HVAC system updates, but they surely have improved the overall experience. Many visible transformations are present as well. Guests boast about their rooms' altered aesthetics, including new pillows and bedspreads, updated wallpaper, new lighting fixtures and bathroom décor. Updated technology in the guest rooms includes new televisions, Wi-Fi and AC units.

A major change that took place during the renovations is the introduction of a brand-new color palette throughout the resort. Many of the former guest rooms and hallways were outfitted with dark colors, giving them a more enclosed, lodge-like feel, which Liz says didn't reflect the summer colors on the island. Now the hallways are painted an elegant cream and the guest rooms are brighter.

The once underutilized deli area has now become the Market Place, which includes: The Boxwood Coffeeshop

& Café; The Boutique, featuring upscale clothing and accessories; and the Garden Gate, which sells sundries, gifts and souvenirs. A 5,000-square-foot Aveda spa opened this year, which is the quintessence of Zen with its relaxation room, full-service salon, abundant windows, cucumber-flavored water and tranquil atmosphere. The lawns and gardens also had a facelift since the Ware family arrived. With the help of a new grounds keeper, the many new flowers and lush lawn are looking more spectacular than ever.

By implementing all these new changes, the Ware family felt they could take Mission Point from a midscale property to an upscale resort; based upon excellent guest feedback, they have done just that.

## Soaring to new heights

Core values are important to the hotel and staff, Liz says. They believe in internal culture, health and wellness, and have a particular interest in the culinary discipline. With the assistance of new executive head chef Gabriel Vera, the cuisine at Mission Point Resort's four restaurants has been elevated to high-class fine dining. Vera and his team believe in a collaborative kitchen, and his team takes pride in their training.

The response to the revolutionized menus has been immense. Liz's personal recommendation is the whitefish — which she says is unlike any you will ever taste — and can be found at Bistro on the Greens, which has the best sunset view at the resort. Liz also says that omelets made by Chef Sheldon at the Round Island Bar & Grill are the best in the world.

The resort can host six to seven weddings in a weekend, and they offer full catering. Mission Point is open May–October. This fall, they will be opening a new wine tasting room overlooking the Straits. The resort offers many amenities



and activities for their guests, such as lawn games, a historic theatre — which features movies, events, meetings, etc. — an on-site kite master, flower pressing and a complimentary kids club. You can even bring a furry friend along if you make prior arrangements with the resort. The main goal of the Ware family, general manager Bradley McCallum and the Mission Point Resort staff is a better overall guest experience.

## A view from above

As the only resort with views of both Lake Huron and the Straits, guests have access to stunning sunrises and sunsets. The Great Lawn provides a sprawling space for people to congregate and take in the beauty of the lake. The general grandeur of the resort can be seen from Main Street. Mission Point Resort will continue to improve and provide the best possible service to the guests who travel from near and far.

"I love the history, the feel of being on an island and the views. I love Michigan," Liz says. "There is just something magical about Mackinac; it's a piece of Americana — a true American experience." ★