

Flash forward 17 years (17?): The Fish in a Bag remains on the Inn's menu, but much has changed -- most notably my taste in clothing, thank God. But that's for another post. On this day, I'm sitting on the front patio of the Inn, sipping a glass of "unwooded" chardonnay on a most beautiful late summer afternoon on [Old Mission Peninsula](#). Earlier the gray skies promised dampness, a warm dreariness, but the sun somehow won them over, pushing through and offering a glint of warmth for a true golden hour. It's heavenly, I think as I sit gazing out across the sparkling waters to a distant [Power Island](#).

This is not the Bowers Harbor Inn of years ago. And yet, it is. Sort of.

You may know the history, or at least some of the history, of this historic restaurant. It's one of those places that's hard to forget once you visit. Built in 1882 as a summer retreat for Chicago lumber baron J.W. Stickney and his wife Genevive, the Inn sits along Traverse City's West Grand Traverse Bay, several miles out Old Mission Peninsula. Maybe you've heard the [ghost story](#) of Genevive, how she's haunted the place because her husband took a mistress and left his fortune to her. Since 1974 it's served as a restaurant, a scenic spot known for its fine dining. It's why high school students -- like my early 1990s self -- make prom night reservations at the Inn each spring.

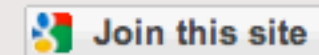
In more recent years, I've made only a couple of trips to the Inn, to celebrate our December birthdays one year and on another occasion to partake in a wine dinner we hoped would rid us of the middle-of-winter blues. (Mostly, quite honestly, it just broke our budget. But the food and wine? Fantastically amazing.)

Chef Paul Olson, who took the reigns of the Inn's kitchen a little over a year ago, acknowledges the reputation the Inn long has held. In other words, this married dad to two school-age kids gets that the restaurant has a hoity-toity past -- and he's doing what he can to change it for the better.

Far from compromising the historic integrity of the restaurant - the goal of current owners Jon Carlson and Greg Lobdell, after all, is to preserve the Inn -- Olson simply wants people to feel good about coming on a regular basis and not just saving a visit for special occasions.

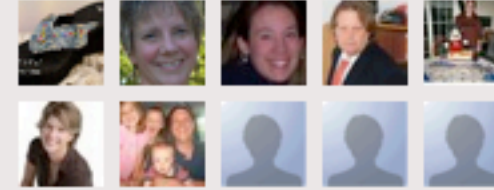
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