



Landmark gets new life as house

by Jason Ogden

EAST TAWAS - In the wake of the recent demolition of two historic buildings in the Tawas, one building, constructed in 1876, is actively being restored.

A part of the old Tawas Point Coast Guard Station, which was bought by Larry LaPointe for the construction of the Cottages of Tawas Point development, is being restored as a private residence. Tony Jordan, owner of Tony Jordan Contracting service, said that it is a common misconception that the entire station building was torn down.

Jordan, a National City resident who has been working on renovating the structure, said, when the station was being torn down, the original Coast Guard Life Saving Station was intact. In essence, a building inside of a building was discovered.

"When we first bought the project, we didn't have any intention of restoring the building," said Lisa LaPointe, the daughter of Larry LaPointe.

LaPointe said that the structure was offered to many different individuals and organizations in hopes that it would be restored to its period state. She said that her father even went so far as to offer to build a foundation and move the building.

In the end, Larry LaPointe opted to refurbish the structure - with the outside appearing just as it did in 1876 and the inside a modern two bedroom household - for around \$500,000. The building was even moved 200 feet from its original location.

"The outside is very period," said LaPointe, referring to the mortised and tenoned beams that jut from around the structure.

Jordan said that some of these pieces had to be recreated where the larger addition to the station was added on to the structure.

Lisa LaPointe said that her father is still not sure what is going to be done with the structure when it is completed.

She said that her father was willing to take the plunge and invest in the building, because sometimes history has to be preserved by private citizens.

LaPointe said that the project has been followed by misinformation, like a rumor that the project was being funded by a federal grant.

Jordan said that most people believe that the station was entirely razed and have no idea that LaPointe is breathing new life into the building.

Jordan, who has experience working with 300-year-old New England houses, said he has had a few surprises from the previous occupants of the life saving station.

He said that his crew has found planks with the original construction workers' names on them. Jordan said that one was dated Aug. 2, 1876, the year the life saving station, as well as the Tawas Point Lighthouse, was built.

He has also found a small hat, buttons and a large metal needle, presumably used to sew together sails for Great Lakes vessels, said Jordan.

Jordan speculated that, because it was a military installation, it was most likely kept spotless, which would explain the lack of artifacts.

Jordan also speculated that, when the structure was built, the wood work wasn't done on site, but shaped and created locally and brought in.

Perhaps one of the more unique aspects of the life saving station/new home is the lookout tower on top of the two-story structure.

LaPointe said it would be a good place to just have some quiet time looking out over Lake Huron or, as Jordan said, have a few drinks with friends.

LaPointe said that her father is impressed with the progress of the building, which she once considered a wreck.

"My dad told me he was going to save it and I said 'Good Lord dad!'" she said.

Jordan, with his professional experience as a contractor, said the building was surprisingly intact for its age.

"The lifeguard station is gone as we knew it," said Jordan, "but the life saving station is still here."