

# Scarborough LEADER

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## Several weeks into season, inn has adjusted to changes

**By Molly Lovell**  
*Editor*

Roughly 10 weeks into the season, the Black Point Inn at Prouts Neck buzzed with guests on a recent Monday morning.

In its 129<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of operation, it's the last of eight grand hotels in the Prouts Neck area.

During the past year the inn underwent a major revamping project under its new management, True North Hospitality. The property was reduced to its original footprint and the number of rooms was cut from 84 to 25.

Other changes were made as well; the large ballroom was removed, as was the indoor pool, which was replaced with a smaller outdoor pool. The houses toward the front of the property, facing the entrance, last season were used as guest rooms, but have now been sold as single-family homes.



"People look at change in lots of different ways. We're still in our infancy here so we're being as positive and proactive as we can and do our best to explain these changes to guests," said Jesse Henry, partner with True North Hospitality.

True North Hospitality is made up of several investors, which are all Prouts Neck property owners. They purchased the inn in 2005 from Eric Cianchette.

True North Hospitality manages three other properties in the state which include the Migis Lodge in South Casco, the Inn at Camden Place in Camden and the Inn at Ocean's Edge in Lincolnville.

Neil Porta, who manages the Black Point Inn with his brother, Tim, recognizes that change is difficult, and while some people miss such amenities as the pool, he said guests overall have been "delighted" with the inn's new look.

Porta grew up in the hotel business on Martha's Vineyard and said back then, it was well known that the inn was one of the top three resorts in New England.

"Everyone knew the Black Point Inn had a great reputation. I think what we wanted, and what the owners wanted, was to bring that back – the idea was to make it more of a social property, and less commercial," he said.

Guest services Director Peter Herman said the changes have transformed the inn – before, he said, the inn’s common areas seemed pretentious and stuffy.



In years past, diners at the inn’s formal restaurant, The Point, required a jacket and tie – casual business attire is the style now.

Porta said the inn’s reputation in terms of their menu has not always been favorable in years past.

“Before, there wasn’t any consistency in the quality of the food. We had to overcome that so we hired two very well known people in the area,” he said.

Those two people are Executive Chef Cheryl Lewis and Food and Beverage Director Norine Kotts, both of whom have been recognizable names in the food business in the Portland area for many years.

In the past the menu lent itself to catering to large groups, which the inn is getting away from, Porta said. Much of the food now is also local and fresh.

“We don’t open cans here,” he said.

Another change this year is that when guests book a room, they are also committed to eating two meals in house.

It was a big risk considering the [previous] reputation of the food, Porta said, but he’s confident it was the right decision with the addition of Lewis and Kotts.

Because the inn has fewer guest rooms to rent this season, Porta and his associates have been working to change the inn’s image to attract neighbors in the Scarborough and greater Portland areas to The Point, as well as their less formal restaurant, The Chart Room.

“We are the neighbors of people in Scarborough, Cape Elizabeth and other surrounding towns. When they think about going out to eat or think about having a nice evening, we want them to think of this place. Many people think this is a private club – we really want people to know this is a place to come for either a special occasion, or just a dinner out,” Porta said.

The Chart Room is described as a combination of a bar and pub-style restaurant with lighter fare than The Point. People are invited to come in casual, come-as-they-are attire.

While the inn’s food and public areas underwent much change this season, Porta said he hopes next season’s project will be the upgrading of guest rooms.

“The rooms are big, which is surprising for an old hotel, but they just need some updating,” he said.

Porta said he will look back on this season as “difficult, interesting, and rewarding.”

It was down to the wire the day they opened on June 15 – they got their occupancy permit only two hours before the first guest was scheduled to walk through the doors.

“That’s how close it was in terms of construction and getting the property ready to open. It was chaotic, it was difficult, but now we’re settling in and it’s quite lovely.