

Travel

MIM SWARTZ: PUTTING CONCIERGES TO THE
INSIDE COLORADO: HOP ON A BOAT TO INTER
PAPER TRAILS: IT TAKES FOUR TO TANGO > 8

INSIDE COLORADO

Sign history's register by boating to grounds of Inter-Laken resort

By Lillian Ross
Special to *The Denver Post*

The colorful, boarded-up buildings along the south shore of Twin Lakes, southwest of Leadville, raise the question: What are they, or what were they?

The answer: Inter-Laken Resort. In its day, in the late 1800s, it was quite the posh retreat.

Guests arrived by stagecoach from the rail station at Granite to stay in a hotel with two dining rooms, gold-embossed wallpaper and a dance hall in the shape of a ship. The hotel even had a two-story privy inside, no chamber pots here. Servants' quarters had their own hexagonal privy with compartments numbered to correspond to sleeping rooms.

Resort guests danced, fished, rode

horseback, played billiards on a table inlaid with rare woods and ivory, enjoyed croquet on bluegrass lawns, canoed, or toured the lakes on Idlewild, a 30-foot steamboat, or Dauntless, the resort's 30-foot yacht.

No longer are the grounds of Inter-Laken accessible only to those who hike in along the Colorado Trail.

Twin Lakes Boat Tours not only gives hour-long pontoon boat excursions but conducts hour-long tours of the grounds of Inter-Laken Resort. Visitors can learn about its history and the extensive restoration that took place there last month.

The buildings of Inter-Laken, silent in their boarded state, speak volumes in the annals of Colorado and U.S. history. The resort is listed on the National Historic Registry because of its unique architecture, and its association with the growth of developed rec-



Forest Service

Dexter's Cabin, which is being restored, once belonged to James V. Dexter, a Leadville miner and owner of Inter-Laken Resort in 1883.

reation in the state. In 1984, when the San Isabel National Forest took ownership of Inter-Laken from the Bureau of Reclamation, its primary objective was to protect and preserve this unique property for the benefit of future Coloradans.

Restoration began July 5 on one building, Dexter's Cabin, the two-story personal dwelling of Leadville miner James V. Dexter, owner of Inter-Laken in 1883. After the resort faded from glory near the turn of the 20th century, Dexter's Cabin re-

mained open as a boardinghouse until 1950. It is here where 50 volunteer master woodworkers and craftsmen from Michigan and Wisconsin spent three weeks doing historic preservation and restoration.

Each of the 50 workers spent his or her own time and money in this labor of love. According to their supervisor, Harrison Goodall, the only way to get them to stop working at day's end was to turn off the electric generators.

Goodall, of Conservation Services

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Twin Lakes is Denver, via Int Mountain/Lead Colorado 91 to LA Colorado 82, in Twin Lakes Bo days a week, fr through Septem er. Two-hour (1 grounds) cost 9 nine. \$20 for c High Country T reservations an call 719-221-9

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The details

Twin Lakes is about 130 miles west of Denver, via Interstate 70 to the Copper Mountain/Leadville exit, then south on Colorado 91 to Leadville, south on U.S. 24 to Colorado 82, and west on Colorado 82.

Twin Lakes Boat Tours are offered seven days a week, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., through September, depending on weather. Two-hour tours (including tours of the grounds) cost \$35 for adults, \$28 for seniors, \$20 for children. Tickets are sold at High Country Treasures in Twin Lakes. For reservations and additional information, call 719-221-9919 or 719-486-8347.

Windsprite Cafe, on Colorado 82 in Twin Lakes, can be reached at 719-486-8138. Reservations for lunch or dinner at **Élan** may be made at 719-456-1830.

For more information about Inter-Laken, call 719-553-1428.

in Langley, Wash., specializes in historic structure and architectural conservation. He was impressed by how well Inter-Laken's buildings have survived for more than 120 years. "Almost everything is original -- the paint on the walls, and the immaculate oak and black walnut wainscoting and floors in Dexter's Cabin," Goodall said.

Restoration of Dexter's Cabin will continue next summer. The goal is to

RESORT: History, then a meal

< CONTINUED FROM 67

paint the interior, replace the roof and windows, and restore the porch, kitchen and bathroom. This phase of Inter-Laken's preservation is moving forward thanks to funding from Rocky Mountain Heritage Society and Colorado Preservation Inc.

Officials hope to use Dexter's Cabin as a living-history museum, or rent the facility to overnight guests. With proceeds from Dexter's Cabin, restoration work can begin on the Inter-Laken hotel.

After your boat tour, visit the tiny town of Twin Lakes. Two new restaurants are well worth your attention.

Windspirit Café is a freshly scrubbed, comfortable eatery serving daily lunch and dinner Wednesday through Saturday.

Elan is the new, tony place to dine, and it's tucked in the historic Nordic Inn.

Little Twin Lakes, at the foot of Colorado's Mount Elbert, has raised the bar on mountain dining.

Lillian Ross is a freelance writer who lives in Howard.