

A room with a View

THE LAKE HOUSE
OPENS ITS DOORS TO
THE FINGER LAKES.

BY MARY STONE

Pristine but rugged, historic but modern, immense but cozy are but some of the design dualities the Lake House embodies. The five-building resort is a multilayered canvas—a lush backdrop for locals to experience Canandaigua Lake in a way only a privileged few hitherto could.

And for Manhattanites and others even farther flung, the Lake House is designed to attract people who otherwise might never venture as far as the Finger Lakes, people who didn't even know the region exists.

Two restaurants, a spa that spills out onto the grounds, a timber-frame barn that will serve as an event space, and more than 80 rooms with decks and lake views give people a reason to make the discovery. That is what the Sands hope for, to highlight the wineries they helped put on the map more than half a century ago with their family business, Canandaigua Wine Co. Now a publicly-held alcoholic beverage company based in Victor, NY, Constellation Brands Inc. today has a market capitalization of nearly \$40.9 billion and more than 100 brands in its portfolio.

That portfolio started with wines from the Finger Lakes.

"All the sommeliers know about Finger Lakes wineries. They haven't all been here though," says the project's developer William Caleo, general partner at The Brooklyn Home Company. "Now this hotel can be a gateway for those wineries and breweries. There's a lot happening the world needs to see, and we feel like we have a venue now to expose that."





To that end, the Lake House this year will start dropping guests off from the East River in New York City to Canandaigua Lake. A chartered 8-person Cessna Caravan can get guests to the lake in just over an hour.

Developers made the addition thinking New Yorkers might find the 5.5-hour drive too long. But last summer, during COVID, management said people were absolutely ready to make the trek. Since its opening last year, The Lake House's number one visitor so far are guests from the New York City metropolitan area, William says.

William too lives in New York City. He says: "When you're in a meditation class and they say 'Go back to the place that makes you feel happy and calm.' I go back to Canandaigua Lake, where I'm sitting on the dock."

William and his sister Lyndsay Caleo Karol grew up at the lake, sleeping in the playroom at his grandparents' house, Marvin and Mickey Sands. Eventually, their parents, Richard and Jennifer Sands, bought a house next door.

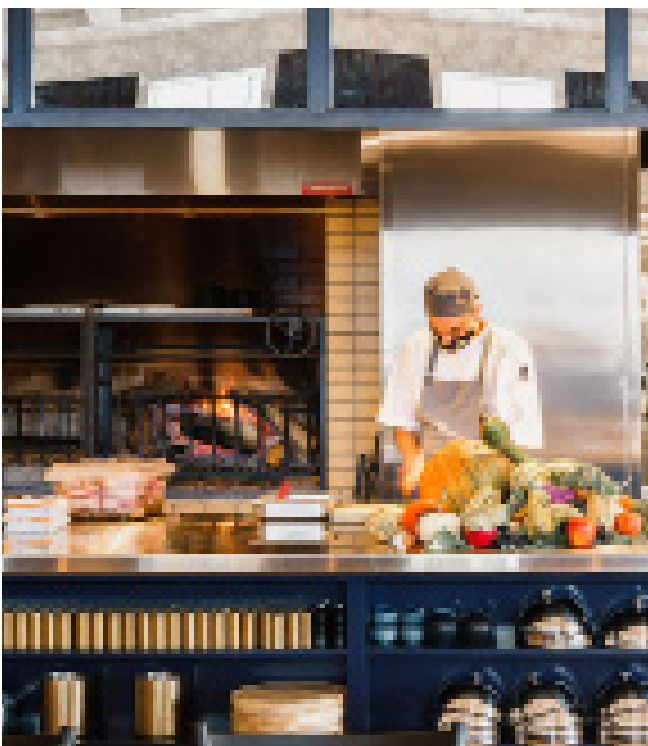
That experience of calm is what William and his sister wanted to bring to the Lake House. The Sands tapped them and their cousin Doug Bennett to oversee, design and develop the resort which William says they wanted to feel like a cruise on an old comfortable boat.

William, Lindsay and her husband Fitzhugh Karol are partners at the Brooklyn Home Company where they redevelop historic townhomes and condos with a lens that looks for the stories and experiences in a property. They tell those stories through design, with the historic materials they incorporate and the artistic interpretation Fitzhugh and Lindsay provide. Their white and wood style is distinct: luminous, refined, airy and, of course, inspired.

"The Lake House is really an extension of what I've been doing with Lindsay and Fitzhugh for the last 15 years," William says. "Now we're going to do the hotel version of what we've been doing. '(We asked) Fitz, where are you passionate? What do you want to do?'"







The features and furniture at the Lake House, even though they are new, feel curated in a way, says; they feel familiar. They're also personal.

Fitzhugh designed most of the art including the steel sculptures outside. The beds are a replica of the bed he and his wife designed for their home. Fitzhugh also designed the chandelier in the lobby (his first) and the long table in the library bar. He designed the striking lobby desk, carved from a fallen willow tree that Grand Wood, a wood working company in Naples, NY (at the southern end of the lake) kiln dried and reconstructed for the Lake House.

Eighty percent of the resort's 124 guests rooms have a deck or patio and 70 percent of them have a view of the lake. By contrast, the Inn on the Lake which occupied the land for decades before the new development, had 130 rooms, only 30 of which had views.

William said he really wanted to redevelop the former Inn on the Lake, but he said those lake views were necessary for the experience they wanted guests to have. In addition, he said, it had a four-pipe boiler system that would heat all 130 rooms in the dead of winter even if only nine were occupied. The system was noisy too, with compressors that ran all night.

By starting anew, builders were able to drill 500-foot wells to heat and cool the property with geothermal power and maintain the silence of the lake, which William says is essential for that experience of calm he wants guests to enjoy.

The Sands family spared no expense in the concept and construction of the nine-acre resort, which in every way is the family's Ode to Canandaigua Lake.

"This obviously isn't about just turning a profit, (the Sands family) were very keen that the Lake House be a catalyst for the area, for the shoreline, for Canandaigua itself," General Manager Simon Piers Dewar says.

"Their ties and roots to Canandaigua go back to the start of Canandaigua Wine Co.," Simon says. "They were very much about giving back. You see that a lot from them in the community anyway, but it's a pretty big endeavor to really put Canandaigua on the map."

That, he says, will be done not just by the resort's beautiful design and construction, but by the team the Sands has assembled, the personal touches, turning down the bed at night, the glass of Prosecco at check-in.

It's about being pampered and cared for, says Director of Food & Beverage Nicholas Massimilian. That, he says, is what is going to bring people back again and again. But the place is special not just for the Sands family and the guests who come to enjoy the Lake House. For the employees too, the resort and the land it's on are sacred. For many of the employees, working there is like coming home.

Nicholas spent his summers at a friend's house on the lake, where he got to enjoy lakeside living. He remembers boating over with his friend's family to the Inn on the Lake and having a bite at the Sand Bar, the lakeside restaurant, which the Sands have kept but re-envisioned.

Coming back to work there, he says, is liking coming full circle. "It was a fun place to be. There was a lot of energy, a lot of people. I always associated the lake with something to look forward to. Those were very happy years where my responsibilities were minimal. It was easy. In many ways being at the lake is easy. Simon and myself and everyone here put in a lot of work to create that feeling of easy living for our guests."

The time, investment and care that went into assembling the right team who could ensure that experience wasn't easy or quick, William says. But that is because this isn't some development a developer would aim to flip in five years once they've maximized revenues, William says. "We don't want to sell this property. I want this to be in the Sands family for the next 100 years, so I didn't mind the long game to pay that (investment) off."

Part of the family's legacy, he says, will be from all of the weddings, engagements, celebrations and moments that guests have over the years and generations to come.

"This is important for our family; this is important for our community, is one of the greatest honors of my life," William says. "I will always feel that way, and I will go to my grave thinking, 'Thank God I had that experience.'"