

PARADISE FOUND — Honey Lake Plantation Resort & Spa

By Barbara Ann Cox, CMP

Build It and They Will Come

First, the Honey Lake Plantation Lodge was built. Guests are greeted with the old-world charm of heart pine floors, cypress walls and a stunning “pecky-wood” cypress ceiling in the spacious gathering room, that includes a mammoth stone fireplace with a commanding moose head above the mantle. With six bedrooms and a full kitchen and wet bar, the Lodge graciously can accommodate 12 adults.

Then comes the Lakeside Pavilion overlooking Lake Obo and Ryan’s River, a perfect venue for the most elegant weddings or milestone celebrations. Like the Plantation Lodge, this site was also built on an original post and beam platform.

Next came the seven cottages — Five Pines and Two Oaks Cottages, to be exact. With more than 1,600 square feet of living space, two bedrooms with private (and big) bathrooms, a large gathering room and two covered porches, the cottages offer a lovely and intimate venue for family and friends.

The Spa Honey naturally comes next — Salon, Fitness Center, Jacuzzi, Pool and Tiki Bar. Especially popular with bridal parties or a day to be pampered, this area has lots of amenities — hair and nail salon, massages, aromatherapy, body treatments, facials, sauna and fitness center. The pool has constant sun from sunrise to sunset and the Tiki Bar has a menu of delicious iced drink.

Built at the same time, the Honey Lake Plantation Church across the way provides a magnificent vista of the 800 acre Honey Lake. Century old stain glass windows, mahogany pews and a



pull-cord tower bell add just the right touch for the feel of an old-fashioned, cozy chapel. The windows, pews and bell were purchased from a church in Madison, Florida. The floors are made from old growth pine logs recovered from local rivers.

Just in case there was not enough going on, the original home of Pansy Ireland Poe was restored. Seated directly on Honey Lake proper, the 2,000 square foot cottage has a totally glassed in living room, a lake-view arbor sitting area and a massive brick fire pit and barbeque combination. Built in the 1900’s, the cottage remains today as it was originally constructed. And that includes a private fishing pier and boathouse.

But wait, there’s more. They were still building. They now have

the Gathering Hall and the Equestrian Lodge. The Gathering Hall boasts 21,000 square feet of meeting space, a handsome Executive Boardroom with balcony overlooking Honey Lake, the graceful “White” Ballroom for elegant private dining, the stunning Jasmine and Grand Ballrooms and Lakeside Outdoor Pavilion with breathtaking views of pristine vistas and clear, spring-fed lakes.

The facade of the Equestrian Lodge resembles the shuttered look of a horse stable. Twenty-four richly appointed guest rooms are available in the Equestrian Lodge, and if you choose to stay here, be sure to stop by The Watering Hole Bar & Grille along the way.

And speaking of dining, be sure to experience the Plantation Grill

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and Whispering Pines Banquet Hall, both located in the Gathering Hall. The Owl's Nest Restaurant & Bar is a charming, screened-in second story meeting and dining hall with a panoramic view of the Honey Lake Plantation, 4,800 acres in all. Unbelievable!

Honey Lake Premiere Catering

Honey Lake Plantation Resort & Spa may be tucked away in rural North Florida but the culinary program is right up there with 5 star venues. Honey Lake Premiere Catering is now the first choice of top wedding planners, major corporations, neighboring plantations and private organizations for all of their special events. Fresh foods from their organic gardens and presentations that are creative, innovative and visually appealing make meals from 25 to 500 each a special occasion. Creating themes, arranging flowers, selecting linen and orchestrating decor are part of their unique trademark services.

“Great Service — Great Food — Great Presentation — Fair Prices” What more can you ask for? Executive Chef Bill Mann works closely with all clients for a most memorable dining experience.

No Wedding? What Else Then?

Consider these options: birthdays, anniversaries, fundraisers, board meetings, holiday parties, concerts, corporate events, executive retreats & conferences, political events, spiritual retreats, training seminars, youth camps, to name a few. Many groups all have held highly successful events at the Plantation and recently include the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Capital City Bank, TSAE, Friends of Monticello Libraries (a record crowd for this event).

How About Some Fun?

For instance: horseback riding, hiking, kayaking, hunting, fishing,

Honey Lake Resort & Spa

1290 Honey Lake Road
Greenville FL 32331
850.948.9911
Jon Williamson, President
Jon@honeylakeplantation.com
honeylakeplantation.com

skeet shooting, wildlife photography and other adventures for one-of-a kind outdoor venues and team-building events. With a strong conservation program for wildlife, the Plantation abounds with quail, turkey and deer (deer limited, of course). Often fathers bring daughters as well as sons for memorable hunting experiences. Honey Lake is teeming with large-mouth bass and various species of bluegill, crappie and other game fish. Unlike most lakes in the area, it is a clear, deepwater lake directly connected to the Florida Aquifer. In the near future, The Trading Post will be open where guests can purchase soda and chips as well as rent guns.

So Who The Heck Are “They”?

The Honey Lake Plantation Resort & Spa is the brainchild of Bob Williamson, along with Teresa, wife of 40 years. Bob is a highly successful entrepreneur from Atlanta who, in 2008, purchased the land in Greenville, Florida as a retirement spot. “This is without a doubt one of the most beautiful places in North Florida and could easily be a state or national park,” Bob Williamson said. “We decided the plantation was simply too magnificent and valuable a regional treasure to keep it private. We decided on public access.”

The concept is brilliant. Each building, each venue on site has its own unique design and decor. From chandeliers to light switches, each building has a specific theme, a specific motif. “Bob is the true visionary behind all of this,” said Teresa. “He selected the colors and

fabrics, even the wall paper. Then, he would bring them to me for my opinion.” Bob came up with the concept of all of the buildings and worked with Tallahassee architecture to design them. “Our son Jon was construction supervisor,” Teresa added. “Bob and I decorated.” Many of the unique rustic and “lodge” decor came from Jackson Hole, Wyoming. Much of the furniture was Southern Heritage Place in Georgia. Teresa claims she did a lot of shopping online for the staples.

For Bob Williamson, his life has not always been the bliss of living in the splendor of paradise as he does now. In his recent autobiography, *Miracle on Luckie Street* (www.MiracleonLuckieStreet.com, 2010), Bob tells his story of how as a teen he was an alcoholic, at 17 he was a drug addict and at 24 he was homeless in the streets of Atlanta and contemplating suicide. He tells his story of how he went from a penniless, violent addict to a multimillionaire and the trials and tribulations of all parts of his life.

Today, Bob is peaceful and serene in his side of Paradise Found, with wife Teresa, sons Jim, Michael and Jon and seven adored grandchildren. Bob invites you to “come for a visit and be sure to look me up and say hello. I live right on the plantation and can think of no other place I’d rather be.”

Build it and they will come! That is exactly what Bob Williamson did and you can be quite sure that the “they” are coming. So, when is your plan to visit Honey Lake Plantation Resort & Spa? Experience Paradise Found! ●

Barbara Ann Cox, CMP has written extensively for the hospitality industry during the past 26 years. She has been a freelance writer since 1984. She is president of Meeting Makers Inc., a conference research and consulting firm and manages the Podium Power Speakers Bureau. Contact Barbara Ann at 850.656.0025 or Barbara@MeetingMakersInc.com.