

Brothers chart new course for storied marina

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LAKE GEORGE - Steve and Nick Lamando, brothers in their forties, have been spending summers in Lake George for as long as they can remember.

They've formed a lifelong attachment to the area and many of its landmark businesses, which is why they felt so strongly about saving Hall's Boat Corp.

When the company, which has been operating as a marina since 1908, went up for sale a few years ago, buyers were eyeing it with development in mind, Steve Lamando recalled.

Not wanting to see the century-old business lost, he purchased it in October 2006 with plans to build on Hall's tradition of excellence in the boating industry.

"I feel good that we've done something to preserve this part of Lake George history," Steve Lamando said. "We've been summering here since we were little kids. It's almost like home for us."

Indeed, for Nick Lamando, Hall's general manager, it soon will be home.

He's in the process of moving to Lake George from Fishkill.

His brother, who lives in Connecticut, still spends many summers in the area with his family.

But just because the new owner doesn't live here doesn't mean he's not dedicated to the success of the business.

Steve Lamando's already spent more than \$1 million to refurbish the clubhouse, docks, walkways and the workshop where boats are built and serviced.

The clubhouse, in particular, was renovated to include a one-bedroom suite and a two-bedroom suite. Both include kitchens, living rooms, and laundry facilities.

"We redecorated and put in all-new furnishings in the Adirondack style," Nick Lamando said.

The Crawford House, which was an old camp, was also upgraded and furnished to sleep eight. It includes a full-size kitchen, a living room and laundry facilities as well.

Weekly rental prices -- the suites are available for use for the first time this summer -- range from \$1,500 for the smallest to \$2,500 for the largest. The cost includes a boat slip, and visitors have full membership rights during their stay.

Membership rights, ordinarily reserved for members of Hall's Boating Club, have also been enhanced since the Lamando family assumed ownership.

"We've improved on the concierge's service," Nick Lamando said. "Folks can call up, say they want to go out on their boat, and we'll gas it up and have it ready for them when they get here."



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Hall's Boat Corp. boat shop manager Reuben Smith works on a classic wooden boat Tuesday afternoon at the business, which is located in Lake George. The new owner of the company has made many improvements to the business, such as updated lodging and dock repairs.

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Patrons aren't the only ones who get special treatment at Hall's, however. The boats do, too -- especially if they're wooden boats.

Wooden boats get indoor slips to protect them from the elements, and Hall's newly hired boat shop manager will service each craft with expert care and know-how.

Routine service of wooden boats is just one of Reuben Smith's responsibilities as boat shop manager, though.

"The Halls had been servicing boats here since the '20s," Smith said. "And now the owner wants to expand the business into restoration and new construction of wooden boats."

Making sure this happens is Smith's job -- a task he's more than equal to.

Smith grew up in the world of wooden boat building.

"Wooden boats are my specialty," Smith said. "My uncle and my dad started building boats in the '70s, and I worked in their shops."

After moving to Massachusetts from Northern New York and opening a business there in 2000, Smith also helped found the Massachusetts Bay Maritime Artisans, an organization that strives to preserve regional maritime history, Smith said.

To uphold that mission, Smith said he's given boat-oriented courses at places as prestigious as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Smith hopes to continue this sort of education by offering workshops on wooden boats at Hall's.

"Very few places have this dedication to wooden boats," Smith said. "It's a great opportunity for a fool like me."

Nick Lamando chuckled appreciatively at that comment.

"And it's a great opportunity for us," Lamando added. "We can do more than just service and repair boats now that we have Reuben. We can do structural work, and we can do custom wooden boats if someone wanted them."