



B&B

Gracious Serenity

Innkeeper traded bustling city life for laid-back country living

by Linda C. Feltman

THE MITCHELL PONDS PROPERTY IN CLARION County had been in Mary Ann Moulin's family for five generations when her parents decided to sell. Mary Ann's brother, who lived in New York City at the time, called her to declare that he was going to buy the farm. Mary Ann's response? "You're crazy. I am never leaving Seattle."

The last thing Mary Ann would have believed was that she would ever be an innkeeper at her former family home. About a decade later, much to her own surprise, she decided to make a major lifestyle change and became an active owner of the Clarion County farmstead in 1993.

"I left the BMWs and city life to return to rural Pennsylvania," Mary Ann says. "I moved back to share the serenity and the beauty of this place with folks who need to get away."

Mitchell Ponds Inne, which is located amidst hundreds of acres of countryside in northwestern Pennsylvania, provides the ideal get-away. It is far enough away from the hustle and bustle of everyday living for someone to become refreshed and relaxed, yet it is close enough to recreational opportunities and shopping to content those who might easily go stir crazy with nothing to do.

I count myself as one of those "stir crazy" sorts who has to stay busy, but I found the solitude welcoming after an active day of touring the area. On a cold, clear winter night, the stars were stunning. My daughter, Carrie, stood outside for probably 30



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minutes, unconcerned about the cold while marveling at the night sky shimmering with tiny lights.

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LINDA C. FELTMAN

The next morning we walked across the lawn to the main house to enjoy a bountiful breakfast featuring Mary Ann's specialty, pumpkin pancakes. A gracious hostess, Mary Ann is the sort of person you feel as though you've known for a lifetime. In fact, the night we chatted, I found myself sharing tales about things often reserved for old friends and rarely revealed to new acquaintances.

It is difficult to imagine her in the fast-paced life she once lived in Seattle. Her decision to return to Pennsylvania to welcome guests to her family home was without a doubt the right one. One of her parting remarks to us was how glad she is to share this place with others and how much the wonderful people she has met here have added to her life. I would say that the same would be true of anyone who has the pleasure of meeting Mary Ann. ♡

—Linda C. Feltman has been visiting B&Bs and inns throughout Pennsylvania since 1991.

The surrounding area features countless antique shops, interesting restaurants and a variety of rail trails for hiking and biking. The nearby little borough of Foxburg contains shops and restaurants. More information is available at foxburgboro.com. Details on trails in the area can be found at trailink.com/city/foxburg-pa-trails.aspx. For more about Clarion County and other surrounding counties, visit visitpago.com or PAwilda.com.

DETAILS

Mitchell Ponds Inn, 108 Mitchell Ponds Lane, Knox, Clarion County; 800-555-6582; info@mitchellponds.com; mitchellponds.com

A total of seven bedrooms available in two 1800s-era buildings. The Carriage House offers a comfortable and private place for family and friends to stay. A second-floor private guest area features natural beamed cathedral ceilings, a large living room with an expansive view of the pond, a gas fireplace, a kitchenette, two bedrooms and a bath. On the ground floor are a spa room with a large Jacuzzi and sauna and another bedroom with two twin beds. Rates are \$185 for two and \$300 for four. In the same building, a ground-floor garden entrance room with a private bath is available for \$110. The Victorian-era farmhouse features a suite with living room, bedroom and bath for \$140. Each guest area has cable TV/VCR/DVD and air conditioning.

Rates include a full breakfast served each morning. Private gourmet dinners can be arranged to be served at the inn with a 48-hour advance dinner reservation. A restored 1889 barn on the property provides delightful "country chic" event space for a reception with up to 300 people; it is available from late May to early October. An in-ground cement pool is open to guests in the summer, and the large 25-foot-deep pond is home to trophy-size largemouth bass and other varieties of fish. Catch and release is permitted. A BBQ grill is available for guest picnics.

Surrounded by antique shops, restaurants and rail trails for biking and hiking, Mitchell Ponds Inn offers a variety of lodging settings in a country atmosphere.