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Article published Mar 25, 2014

## Partners purchase Inn at Mystic; plan major renovations

[Brian Hallenbeck](#)

**Mystic** — When Timothy J. Brown originally moved to the area in 1993 to take a job as Foxwoods Resort Casino's vice president of hotel operations, he took a liking to the Inn at Mystic.

He and his wife used to eat once a week at the property's Flood Tide Restaurant. He still remembers the maître d's name.

On Monday, Brown, of Noank, and a partner, Michael D'Amato, president of D'Amato Builders and Advisors of Norwich, bought the property, paying \$5.35 million for 15 acres of real estate that includes some 60 motel rooms in two buildings, the restaurant, a mansion reserved for weddings and other events, and an outbuilding known as the Gate House, where Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall honeymooned in 1945.

The new owners plan to spend close to an additional \$1 million to return the property to its former glory, Brown said Tuesday in an interview.

"We want to bring a bit of life back to it," he said. "Everyone you talk to around here remembers it as a great place."

Brown, whose post-Foxwoods casino career has taken him to Salamanca, N.Y., Oklahoma (twice), South Dakota, Miami and the Bahamas, met Tuesday with the inn's employees, several of whom later hailed the transaction.

"This is very exciting," said Awilda Pantoja, a manager who has worked at the property for 16 years. "(Former owner Joyce "Jody" Dyer) couldn't have found a more perfect buyer. They told us about their plans and it all sounds so wonderful."

Art Watson, the property's director of maintenance for more than 30 years, said the grounds and buildings were in desperate need of improvements.

"It's gone downhill," he said of the property.

Brown said he and D'Amato, who have worked together on casino projects in the past, will begin renovating all of the guest rooms on the property immediately and will "redesign and rebrand" the restaurant. The Flood Tide, long popular with both locals and tourists, had closed in November, Brown said.

"We hope to have the vast majority (of the renovation work) completed before Memorial Day," he said. Plans call for enlarging the motel lobby and fashioning three distinct areas of the restaurant, "one upscale, one more casual and a big lounge."

The new owners also intend to focus on the event side of the business, courting weddings, parties, corporate gatherings and pursuing "music opportunities."

"Our goal is to create a real destination experience," Brown said.

The property now employs nine people. Brown said he and D'Amato hope eventually to employ 50 to 60.

The resurrection of the Inn at Mystic, long owned by Dyer and her sister Nancy Gray, should be a boon to Mystic tourism, said Ed Dombroskas, executive director of the Eastern Regional Tourism District.

"It's the icon of Mystic lodging properties," he said. "We get more inquiries about it from people looking to stay there and because of its history. We're very pleased that it's going to continue."

The mansion on the property was built in 1904 by Katherine Haley, widow of one of the brothers who owned the Fulton Fish Market in New York City. W. Frederic Mosel purchased the mansion in the 1940s. Dyer's father bought land adjacent to the mansion in 1963, and there built the Mystic Motor Inn and the Flood Tide Restaurant.

In 1970, Dyer and Gray took over the inn, which acquired the mansion in 1980.

The sellers in the transaction were represented by Rick Weiner and Colette Harron of William Pitt Sotheby's International Realty. Michael Franklin of Coldwell Banker represented the buyers.

The property originally listed more than a year ago for \$8.5 million.

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