

New hotel unveiled

By Andrew McKeever

MANCHESTER >> The first new hotel constructed from the ground up in Manchester in several years is set to open its doors Thursday, Dec. 3.

The Taconic, as the new hotel is known, will be having a "soft opening," said John Burnham, the hotel's general manager. A formal "grand opening," complete with a ribbon cutting ceremony, is set for Saturday, Dec. 19.

The amount of energy and passion that have gone into the construction, outfitting and staffing the 58,000 square foot building, which contains 87 rooms, including six suites, in addition to three "cottages" facing Main Street have been inspiring, he said.

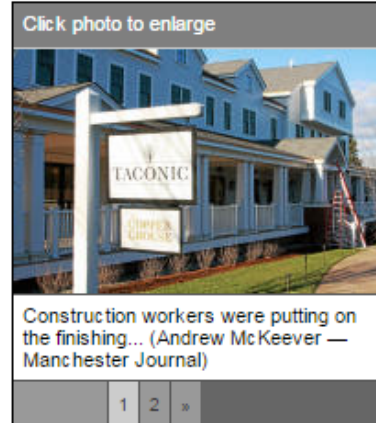
"I've been in this business for 20 years and I've never seen anything like this," he said. "I'm really excited about what it means to this community more than I am about anything else."

The hotel occupies the site of the former Village Country Inn, previously known as The Worthy Inn. Ground was first broken on the site back in September, 2014.

The three cottages each have their own names — the Worthy, Bennett and Nicklewhite.

The soft opening will allow the staff to get the hotel up and running and "get our feet wet," Burnham said. The hotel employs about 80 people, and that number will probably rise in the busier times of the year when more seasonal staff will be brought on, he said. The reservations have been coming in at a strong clip, he added.

The hotel is owned by the Heaton Companies, based in Vero Beach, Fla., and will be managed by San Francisco-based Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants, which operates 61 "boutique" hotels in 31 U.S. cities, according to its website. The Taconic is considered a boutique hotel and will be the first property they have operated and managed in Vermont, according to a press statement released by Kimpton.



Construction workers were putting on the finishing... (Andrew McKeever — Manchester Journal)

"As we expand our brand, we are continuing to look to destinations that will excite Kimpton loyalists but are also natural extensions of our metropolitan locations," said Joe Capalbo,

Director of Operations for Kimpton Hotels in New England in a prepared statement.

"Manchester's proximity to New York City, Boston and Montreal, coupled with the unique energy of the town and its people, made it an ideal next-destination for Kimpton to plant its roots."

The hotel will also feature a new restaurant, called The Copper Grouse, which the hotel hopes will also become a local attraction for area residents as well as for its guests. Initially, it will be serving breakfasts and dinners, and then adding lunches as well later on, Burnham said.

Adam Rafferty, a Vermont resident from Burlington, will be the head chef. The restaurant, which will also have a "chef's table" and an exhibition-style kitchen to give diner's a close up view of the culinary preparation. The restaurant is located on the southern end of the hotel, and also looks out across a 16-foot wide veranda-like porch towards Main Street.

Guests checking in will likely enter the hotel from the southern end, where a U-shaped area will greet them and allow for efficient unloading and circulation of vehicles in and out.

According to the press statement released by Kimpton, The Copper Grouse will offer dishes such as Cheddar Ale Soup with Grafton Village Cheese and Burlington's Switchback Ale, Pan Roasted Lamb Sirloin with young carrots and candied beets and Cider Steamed Mussels with Citizen Cider and Vermont Smoke & Cure bacon. The elevated beverage program complements the cooking, incorporating classic cocktails, artisanal spirits and a wide selection of Vermont craft beers. To celebrate the fact that Vermont has more breweries per capita than any other state, The Copper Grouse will offer beer cocktails and host beer-pairing dinners spotlighting local brewmasters. Rounding out these offerings is a selection of over 100 wines.

The hotel will also offer 9,600 square-feet of flexible meeting space. A ballroom — known as the Trillium Ballroom after the hiking trail on Mt. Equinox — on the north end of the hotel, looks out over what will be a swimming and bathing area in the summer and possibly a small skating rink in the winter months. It can sub-divided into three smaller meeting spaces. It opens onto a terrace and an event green large enough to accommodate 400 people for special events and weddings.