

MARCH 10, 2008 F.A.H.P. NEWS

The Pottles of Southern Pines: In North Carolina's Sand Hill country 75 miles southwest of Raleigh, two winter resorts six miles apart developed simultaneously starting at the end of the nineteenth century. The Tufts family of Boston (Tufts University, etc.) bought several square miles of ground and started Pinehurst in 1895 with the building of the Holly Inn. About ten years later they built a much larger and fancier hotel called the Carolina. Cottages and small shops grew up around the hotels, and for northerners not wanting summer weather but simply a milder climate, this area became very popular for about 4 months each year. The main attractions at Pinehurst were horseback riding and polo, trapshooting, and golf. Annie Oakley and her husband, Frank Butler, were hired by Pinehurst to teach trapshooting at the gun club during World War I. The Holly Inn and the Carolina are still in business (the Carolina is now the Pinehurst Hotel), and the area of Pinehurst is world-famous with its 20 or more golf courses.

Southern Pines, 6 miles to the east with one of the first dual highways connecting the two, started as a friendly family town on the main line of the Seaboard Air Line Railroad. Before 1900 several small frame family-type hotels grew up on both sides of the tracks, which were shielded from the downtown area by rows of magnolias parallel to the railroad. At the high point in 1929, there were about 10 of these hotels in Southern Pines, the most popular (but not the most modern or expensive) of which was the Hollywood. The Pottle family of Jefferson Highlands in New Hampshire's White Mountains either built or bought the Hollywood Hotel about 1900. Right in town on New York Avenue, the property was 4 short blocks from the railroad station and was bordered by U.S. Highway #1, the main driving route from the northeast to Florida. Nice old trees and small gardens bordered the 3-story frame building of about 100 rooms. It was not only a family-type hotel but the social center of the community.

The first Frank Pottle had turned the old family farmhouse facing the Presidential Range of the White Mountains into a summer boarding house, and he and his son Frank, Jr., enlarged this to include about 20 rooms. They became known for the excellent meals served to their guests. Taking a liking to the hotel business, they invested in Southern Pines, a much-improved winter climate as compared to northern New England. The senior Pottles passed on in the 1920's, and Frank, Jr., and his whole family were involved in running the Highland House at Jefferson Highlands (4 months each year) and the Hollywood at Southern Pines (probably November to April). My mother's sister, Helen Shallcross, first knew of the Pottles in the mid-1920's when she stayed several weeks each year at the Highland House to alleviate her extreme allergies during ragweed season. Not only did she get to know the family, but many of their repeat guests who would typically come each year when she was there. Naturally, the Pottles talked about their much larger operation at Southern Pines.

I first passed through Southern Pines and stayed at the Hollywood with my parents and Aunt Helen in 1928, but I don't remember that. I do remember 1931, however, and many times after that. For the first 3 months of 1932 and again for 6 weeks in early 1935, my parents rented a house in town. The procedure was always the same: check in at the Hollywood, contact a

realtor (Mrs. Pottle was always very helpful and knew everyone), get settled into a house, and during our stay in Southern Pines go to the Hollywood at least once a week where there would be special free entertainment in the lobby, open to all. Sometimes it would be a musicale, other times something for young folks. In 1935 when the Mancills were with us, I recall the twins and I being entertained by a ventriloquist and by a magician on different evenings. Many families followed this pattern. If we had to get out of our house before we were ready to head north, we would again spend a few days with the Pottles at the Hollywood.

Mrs. Pottle would hold forth each evening in the lobby, entertaining her guests. She would tell how proud she was of her oldest son Robert, who was a young banker in Providence. Her daughter, Dorothy, was the head waitress in the dining room, showing all guests to their respective tables. Frank Pottle, Jr., her husband who was head of the operation from the 1920's until his death in 1943, spent the evenings near the cash register behind the front desk across the foyer from the front door, checking people in, making change, giving out room keys, and often lighting up a long cigar. A man of few words, he was responsible for an excellent and reasonably-priced operation. The younger boys, John and George, grew up in the hotel business, and followed this career throughout their lives. John was for many years proprietor of the Eeseola Lodge at Linville, NC, high in the Smokies, and George owned and managed a resort hotel in Spring Lake, NJ., and in his final years lived through the winter in the family home adjacent to the Hollywood Hotel in Southern Pines.

After World War II, vacation patterns had changed and the old hotels in Southern Pines fell on hard times. Today the community is surrounded by huge golf resorts. The Pottle boys and their mother tried to keep the Hollywood going against difficult odds. The last time we stayed there was in 1954 when I drove my parents and Aunt Mary Ferguson down in my '52 DeSoto sedan. Still maintaining the integrity of the operation, John and George Pottle talked about building a motel on the property along Route 1. That didn't happen, and I think they closed the hotel a few years later. Driving through in 1964, it was boarded up. In 1983, the hotel had been razed, but I had a short visit with George Pottle at his home on one corner of the property. The Highland House at Jefferson Highlands was torn down or burned in the 1960's or before, but for many years thereafter an old wooden sign tacked to a tree along U.S. Route 2 still read "Highland House".

It should have been mentioned last week that at our Annual Meeting on February 26, five members of F.A.H.P., Jerry Novak, Greg Landrey, John McNamara, Bill Schwoebel, and Steve Bryce were elected to 3-years terms on the Board of Directors, and Bill Enslen was elected to fill the unexpired term of Anne Cleary, which expires in 2009. At the Board Meeting that followed two days later, Mike May was re-elected president, Steve Bryce was elected vice president, Anne Cleary was re-elected secretary and Bill Enslen was re-elected treasurer. Our thanks go to Joe VanSciver, who did not stand for re-election to the Board, for his 3 years of service, and to Rob Robison for serving as vice president for the past two years. -Tom

