

FEBRUARY 9, 2009 F.A.H.P. NEWS

Eastern Mountain Resorts and the Railroads that served them: From northern New England to the Great Smokies, the lure of the mountains attracted summer visitors in great numbers during the 19th century. From country boarding houses to huge resort hotels, there was something for nearly everyone's taste and pocketbook. The phenomenal growth of the railroads during this period made access possible to previously remote areas.

I can mention only a few of the famous places in this issue of the *News*. In Maine there were the 3 hotels at Poland Spring, built from the profits of selling spring water. The Maine Central R.R. trains stopped at Danville Junction, 6 miles away, and guests were transported to and from with a fleet of Stanley Mountain Wagons. Israel Marshall and his son Clarence reached Poland Spring in this way during the summer of 1910. In the White Mountains of New Hampshire, perhaps the most famous place was the Mount Washington Hotel at Bretton Woods, followed by the Crawford House, the Waumbek, and the Dodge family's Mountain View House near Whitefield. Two railroads served the area, one a branch of the Boston & Maine from White River Junction, and the other coming from the Boston area through North Conway and the Crawford Notch. In the Green Mountains of Vermont there was the Equinox House at Manchester (frequented by Mary Todd Lincoln and her boys in the summer of 1864), and served by the Rutland R.R. The Red Lion Inn at Stockbridge and the Berkshire Inn at Great Barrington, both in the Berkshires of western Massachusetts, were served by the New York, New Haven & Hartford.

The Lake Placid Club may have been the most famous hotel in the Adirondacks, served by the Delaware & Hudson and the New York Central. Closer to home, the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western R.R. traversed the Poconos, serving the Delaware Water Gap before climbing to Cresco, the station for Buck Hill Falls and the Skytop Club, and finally Mount Pocono and Pocono Summit, from which station it served nearby Pocono Manor Inn. Going northwest, the "Lackawanna" dropped into Scranton, home of present-day "Steamtown", before heading for Buffalo and shipping on the Great Lakes. There was direct service from New York (Hoboken) to the Poconos, and from Philadelphia with a Pennsylvania Railroad connection at Manunka Chunk Junction, NJ. The route of "Phoebe Snow" was indeed a scenic ride. Like the resorts on the Jersey Shore, a passenger could get to most places in the Poconos from Philadelphia in about 3 hours.

The huge, sprawling hotel between the mountains at Bedford Springs was the first place to be called the "Summer White House", when a Pennsylvanian, James Buchanan, was president. Lincoln's secretary of war, Edwin M. Stanton, also took a little R & R at Bedford Springs. No doubt they arrived by the expanding Pennsylvania Railroad, the main line of which got across the Alleghenies in the late 1840's. A branch off the main line at Altoona took passengers into Bedford and connected with the B & O R.R. west of Cumberland. The famous resorts, still going strong, of White Sulphur Springs, long owned by the Chesapeake & Ohio R.R., and the Homestead at Hot Springs, VA, also featured the beauty and cool breezes of the Alleghenies.

These mountain resorts were outgrowths of earlier spas, usually built around a famous spring. Whether as beneficial as advertised, drinking the water and “taking the baths” in a relaxed and sometimes quite social atmosphere were very popular though not very accessible in the early 19th century. Even in the heyday of the big resort hotels, there was not much physical activity for the guests, based on present standards. They ate three very good meals per day, rocked on a long front porch with a fine view, and got very little exercise. Most visitors shipped a large trunk or trunks with their belongings, enough to last several weeks, and some even came with servants. Stanley Mountain Wagons, carrying up to 12 people with their luggage, were ideal vehicles for these resorts. They were used as trucks when getting ready to open in the spring and to close in the fall. At Estes Park in Colorado, these “Wagons” with their loads had to travel 30 miles from the railhead at Loveland; at Buckwood Inn (Shawnee-on-Delaware), upstream from the Delaware Water Gap, the run from the D L & W station was only 3 miles.

The popularity of eastern mountain resorts began to wane after the dawn of the 20th century, although most kept going, with many new activities added, until late in that century. The magnetism of the seashore, just as close and sometimes closer to eastern population centers, caused new and old ocean and bay resorts to become immensely popular with large segments of the vacationing population. It was no longer necessary (or possible) to get there by train, either.

Three committees met last week in less-than-ideal conditions, as the boiler gave out in the garage-shop-FAHP office building early Monday morning, and a new one was not in place and operating until late Friday, with very cold days between. Thanks to the State of Delaware (Dan Citron, James Wagner, and the maintenance staff at Bellevue) and Hentkowski Plumbing & Heating, things are 100% again, and now none of our 3 heating boilers are more than 3 years old. The Finance Committee with Bob Reilly, treasurer, and Mike May, president, on a conference call, met at 4 P.M. Thursday, followed by the Events Committee at 7:15. Friday morning at 11:00, the new Museum Committee, chaired by Rose Ann Hoover, had its first meeting with 12 in attendance and certain volunteers were given projects on which to report at the next meeting of this committee on February 27.

With snow forecast last Tuesday, and with little heat in the shop, our work session was cancelled, but on Thursday nearly 20 volunteers took part. Ongoing Stanley projects progressed, and we have had a very helpful exchange with Charlie Johnson, where he gave us several hints on the best way to proceed with the Model 607 restoration. We have been able to obtain the steel shelving formerly in George Barczewski’s garage, and the plan is to install this along the back wall of the working garage, moving a few things to make room. Walter Higgins and Jerry Novak are heading this effort.

The Events Committee attempted to finalize our schedule for 2009. It needs to know which qualified drivers want to participate in Point-to-Point at Winterthur this spring. The date is Sunday, May 3. Please let Anne Cleary or Catherine Coin know if you’d like to go and take a car. Catherine is asking the Point-to-Point committee for some reimbursement, based on the number of cars we provide. Last year, we took 11 Stanleys and the Rauch & Lang.

Tom