

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, October 29, 2018

Foliage Trip to New England, 1986 (continued from last week): We liked Boothbay Harbor and returned for a night and more lobster in 2003. In '86, however, we headed for the areas of most spectacular foliage, and we hit it just right! It was an early fall in those parts, and even though we were ahead of the big bus tours by a week or two, the weather could not have been nicer.

We moved westward across Maine, stopping briefly at Poland Spring, a prominent late 19th- and early 20th-century resort built by the Ricker family from the profits from selling Poland Spring Water. The frame hotels had been razed, including the Mansion House where Israel Marshall stayed during the summer of 1910 and where F. E. and Augusta Stanley were photographed in 1913 in a new Model 78. From 1909 to '15, the huge Poland Spring House on the hill near the spring restricted motor vehicles on the grounds except for Stanley Mountain Wagons. As we crossed into New Hampshire near Fryeburg and passed through the Conways, Crawford Notch lay ahead. Heading upgrade through the Notch, which also carried a Canadian National Railway line from Portland (ME) to Montreal, the foliage became more brilliant, and we walked around the great porches on the Mount Washington Hotel at Bretton Woods, taking in the beauty of the brilliant yellow of the white birch forests around. Our destination that night was the Spalding Inn near Whitefield, New Hampshire.

I had known of the Spalding Inn since 1936, when my mother and Mary Passmore inspected it while staying at the Mountain View House just up the road. The Spalding family were "poor cousins" of the Dodges, who owned the Mountain View and something like 10,000 surrounding acres. I took my mother and Mary Passmore to the Spalding Inn for a one-night stay in 1955, and I stayed there with the Jones, Gardner, and Fisher families and our '32 Packard in 1974. In 1980, while on the Glidden Tour in the Model 87, I had dinner there at the invitation of the Gardners. Ted Spalding, who ran the inn with his wife, was not well, and died before I was there again for one night in 1981. Before we arrived in 1986, the property had been sold.

Ruth and I stayed at the Spalding Inn for two days or so, and it was still well run. A young lawyer from the neighboring town of Whitefield had bought it and retained the Spalding staff. He made his rounds in the dining room each morning, greeting his guests and making them feel at home. We walked through the nearby woods and viewed the unsurpassed scenery of the White Mountains' Presidential Range to the southeast. (The Spalding Inn was subsequently sold again, and when Ruth and I stayed there again in 2003, it was poorly operated and maintained. However, the Mountain View House just up the road and long boarded up in the 1990s, had received a total renovation and opened that year as the Mountain View Grand. This famous hotel was the headquarters for the 2004 annual Eastern Steam Car Tour.)

Our next overnight stop was the Old Tavern at Grafton, Vermont. This has always been a special place run by the Windham Foundation. Since we were there two nights, the day between turned out to be memorable. Traveling on a good dirt road straight west from Grafton, we were in the woods most of the way as we crossed the main spine of the Green Mountains to Manchester. The sun shone through the white birches with their golden leaves, and we didn't pass a car for many miles. Just south of Manchester, we visited Hildene, the summer home of Robert Todd Lincoln, the president's only son who lived to adulthood, until his death in 1926. Then we walked briefly around the huge Equinox House, Vermont's largest resort hotel, which was undergoing major renovations in an attempt to make it a convention hotel. Mary Lincoln and her two living sons, Robert and Tad, stayed there for 3 weeks in the summer of 1864 and made reservations for all of them, including the President, for 1865. While Abraham, who was assassinated in April 1865, never made it, Robert must have liked the area enough to build a fine home on spacious grounds near Manchester.

From Grafton, Ruth and I went to Boston before our return home, and we stayed at a very nice hotel near Copley Square. I was invited by Chris Hutchens, then a trustee of the Stanley Museum, to join him and others at an office in the old Stanley Dry Plate (and car manufacturing) building in Watertown, which the Stanleys

always called Newton, as the latter was a more prestigious address only two blocks away. Long owned by the Bachrach Portrait Studios, this building had been sold to an architect who was interested in the Stanley Museum and who was occupying a small portion of it. After that meeting, we headed for Auburn Heights, after a most enjoyable trip through New England when it showed off its spectacular color.