

## Tom Marshall's Weekly News, June 28, 2010

**Old-Fashioned Hotels Still in Business Today:** Although the purpose of our trip last week was not specifically to visit old hotels, Ruth and I stopped at five such and stayed at three of them in Virginia, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania. Built in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, they are going strong today, and while they are popular only with a small segment of the traveling population, there seems to be a market to keep them prosperous.

We stopped our first night away at the Mimslyn Inn at Luray, Virginia, built in 1931 as the Great Depression was settling in. This imposing hotel is set high above the main street of Luray, one-half mile from the famous caverns. Built in a style of a much earlier period, its 45 rooms are nicely furnished and similar to the first time I stayed there with my parents in 1937, as we experienced our first trip on the Skyline Drive in my dad's '34 Packard Twelve during foliage time. The spacious lobby and the large dining room with its white tablecloths look much as they did when the hotel was built. The 1949 Glidden Tour used the Mimslyn as its Luray headquarters the night the tour passed through. My father and I stayed there in the early 1950s en route to AACA spring meets in Waynesboro, Virginia. I thought the hotel was long-since gone, but it turns out it underwent a restoration in 2007–08 and re-opened as if time had stood still.

Passing through, we enjoyed the splendor of the Homestead at Hot Springs, Virginia, where we were offered complimentary afternoon tea, even though we had not spent a dime at the hotel. This was true southern hospitality at a luxurious resort that lays claim to being one of the earliest spas in this country (the medicinal spring was established before 1800). The large hotel has been beautifully maintained over the years. That night we stayed at the General Lewis Inn at Lewisburg, West Virginia, a few miles west of White Sulphur Springs. A small inn in an interesting historic town, it opened in 1929, and all rooms, including the bedrooms, are furnished with authentic antiques, as they have been since its opening. The meals in its small dining room were probably the best we had on our trip.

Two nights later, we stayed at the Summit Inn on a mountain top east of Uniontown, Pennsylvania. Opened in 1907, this is a place where you can sit on the spacious porch in white rockers and enjoy the view. With a large lobby and beautiful staircase, it is somewhat of a mystery how this property can be prosperous in 2010, but it was certainly not shabby, and they did cater a wedding reception and said they had 98 guests staying overnight when we were there.

Finally on our way home Friday, we stopped at Bedford Springs. Closed and boarded up from 1987 until 2007, this beautiful old property between the mountains has taken a new lease on life, as many millions were obviously spent before it opened as a member of the Omni hotel chain. About 1796, the spring was harnessed to establish Pennsylvania's first spa, and a boarding house was built about 1805. The sprawling frame hotel, which has three floors with balconies for each of 270 rooms, served as the summer White House for President Buchanan in the late 1850s. Lincoln's secretary of war, Edwin M. Stanton, took some R & R here during the dark days of the Civil War. I stayed here with my father in the late 1930s, and Bedford Springs was host to two AACA Glidden Tours in 1948 and 1951. Ruth and I stayed overnight in 1985 when it was quite run-down. Today it is spectacular!