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Resort Hotel Staffs and How They Moved: Before World War II, most chain hotels were in large cities, and there were few. The names of Statler, Biltmore, and Ritz-Carlton come to mind, and like the Pennsylvania Railroad, no one thought they would ever be gone from the American scene. Until sophisticated (and expensive) chains got into the resort business in a big way in the late 20th century, however, resort hotels were usually “one-of-a-kind,” with certain properties and their staffs in stiff competition for the leisure hotel business. Most resort hotels were seasonal; that is, southern hotels would close in the summer, and northern hotels would be closed for much of the winter and spring. This meant that serious promotion was best done by word-of-mouth, but individual operators had few regulations to interfere with their way of doing business. Repeat guests often had loyalties to the management and staff, which was not always at the same seasonal location. There were hundreds of resort areas with their famous hotels; I will discuss here only those in New Hampshire and the south.

Before World War II In the eastern United States, prime examples of hotel staffs that moved occurred between Florida in the winter and the White Mountains of New Hampshire in the summer. Summer seasons lasted only about 14 weeks, with four or five weeks on either end being required for preparing to open and close, which in the north meant winterizing. The winter season was somewhat longer, but the height of the social season at places like Palm Beach was only from mid-January until March 1. How could the operators make ends meet? Rates usually ranged from \$6 to \$20 daily per person, including three sumptuous meals.

Sometimes the operators owned their properties (or one of them), and sometimes they had professional staffs and would lease from an inactive owner. Soreno Lund, for example, owned the Soreno Hotel in St. Petersburg, Florida, but leased a hotel in New Hampshire like the Maplewood Club or the Waumbek, in sight of the Presidential Range. James B. Smith and his wife owned the Wentworth-by-the-Sea near Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and leased the Seaside in Miami Beach. Their trained staffs would move with their managers and included not only cooks, waiters and waitresses, luggage porters, housekeepers and maids, but also cleaners and maintenance people who would prepare for seasonal openings and closings. Lodgings were furnished all members of the staffs, often in the rear of the hotel or in a separate building on the property. Meals, too, were part of the compensation, consisting of excellent left-overs from the main menus of the respective hotels.

On a smaller scale, I have written about the Pottle family of Jefferson Highlands, New Hampshire, who owned and operated the Highland House there (20 to 30 guests) and a much larger hotel, the Hollywood, at Southern Pines, North Carolina. With a short summer season in New Hampshire, they were open from November to May at the Hollywood, but their best time was in March and April when golfers were coming north from Florida and would spend several days playing the courses around Southern Pines and Pinehurst.

For those like my family members who could take advantage of short stays at hotels of this type, it was a great experience at a very reasonable cost. However, some found \$5 per day, including three meals too expensive. Also, it was a time of severe segregation in this country, a way of life for all citizens. The Christian white majority had access to everything they could afford. Colored people (considered a much kinder term than “black”) would not dare try to stay at such a place -- they were not even allowed in most restaurants. Even Jewish people were frequently excluded, and a travel agent such as myself as late as the 1950s had to know which resort hotels were “restricted.” Many of my clients wanted to go to a restricted hotel. Except for the town of Bethlehem, which was full of Jewish hotels, almost everything in the White Mountains was restricted. Conversely, most Miami Beach hotels had a Jewish clientele, with only about two that were “restricted” for white Christians only. The growth of resorts in this country is a fascinating story, but no one today can be proud of the part segregation played in this story. It is seldom written about and for good reason.

Today, the Mount Washington Hotel at Bretton Woods, the largest of all White Mountain hotels, is still in operation, although it has had its “ups and downs.” The spectacular Mountain View House at Whitefield,

operated for several generations by the Dodge family, had been completely renovated and opened in 2003 as the “Mountain View Grand.” The eastern Steam Car Tour, sponsored by the Stanley Museum, stayed there in 2004. The Wentworth-by-the-Sea, boarded up for many years, was restored and opened as a Marriott resort property. The Maplewood Club burned to the ground, and the Pottle properties in New Hampshire and North Carolina were razed.