

EDWARDIAN ELEGANCE



Regal comfort

THE CLAREMONT HOTEL in Southwest Harbor gives guests a taste of what summering in Maine meant during the first part of the 20th century — languid days, croquet, sailing and fine food without schedules, deadlines or demands.

Time seemingly stands still at Claremont Hotel

BY JOHN COLE

Times Record Contributor

SOUTHWEST HARBOR

The view from the gentle hilltop where the Claremont Hotel rises in its 19th century glory is nothing less than magnificent.

For that hill slopes to the east, slides into the bright waters of Somes Sound and there across the water rise the rounded mountains of Mount Desert, the great glacial mementos that are the heart of Acadia National Park.

This single spot on the water's edge in Southwest Harbor is one of the first in the nation to greet each new day's rising sun. And on this cloudless early morning in August, that sun spills along the Claremont's butter-yellow siding, heightens the contrast of the dark green shutters that frame each gleaming window, and encourages Seth French as he readies for his eight o'clock dive off the end of the hotel's long dock.

Now the senior member of a three-generation family that has been summering at the Claremont for many years, French has never missed his before-breakfast dip.

"It makes me feel so fine," he said. "All the troubles of the world just wash away, my heart beats faster and I'm ready for the day."

No one on the Claremont's busy staff pays much attention to their guest who braves the chill Maine waters. They know the swimmer's routine. Like so many of the men, women and children who fill every Claremont room every season, the

IF YOU GO

The Claremont Hotel and its associated cottages are open June 14 to Sept. 14, in season; and May 24 to June 14 and Sept. 14 to Oct. 23, off-season.

Rates vary, depending on season. Generally, single rates in the hotel are \$165 per night, including breakfast, in-season, and range from \$215 to \$235 including a buffet breakfast and dinner. There are additional charges for more than one person and children. Off-season rates are lower.

Cottages, with varying occupancies, range from \$175 to \$240 per night in-season, and the large Rowse House is \$3,200 per week during the peak months.

The Claremont Hotel is approximately 155 miles from Portland in Southwest Harbor.

Call 1-800-244-5036, or go online at www.theclaremonthotel.com.

French family has arrived every summer, year after year.

This is a family-friendly place. Children of all ages are not only welcome, but expected. Many spend each summer of their maturing lives on the Claremont porches, on the long dock, in the elegant boathouse and on the immaculate croquet court.

Boys who began learning the game when they were 6 or 7 are there at 19 or 20 to compete in, and

TRAVEL

perhaps win, the annual Claremont Croquet Classic, now in its third decade.

For this is indeed a summer hotel and has been since 1884 when the tradition was begun by Capt. Jesse Pease and his wife Grace, who built the four-story building that rises so imposingly on the Somes Sound shores.

Those were the days when rustication prevailed as a summer activity, when the Claremont's guests came and stayed from June to mid-September, rocking away the season on the hotel's long porch where wicker rocking chairs still preside in their well-ordered rows.

At the turn of the century, as author Gerald Warner Brace has written, "Mount Desert was a paradise for old families, the quiet and proper Bostonians, the teachers and the clergy, who practiced plain living and high thinking. ... The same people returned to the vast hotels year after year with a strong feeling of proprietorship, and whole families consorted in a harmony of similar tastes and pleasures, no formalities of clothes or class, and people did what they felt like doing. ... It was a fortunate world."

More than a century later, much the Claremont is still remarkably the same.

Surely continuity of ownership is one of the reasons. In 1908, Grace Clark Pease sold the Claremont to Mount Desert physician Dr. Joseph

Please see REGAL, Page 29

than a century.

That and the sort of good fortune that arrived in the person of Jay Madeira in 1981. As the young hotel manager, Jay not only brought his administrative skills, but his talents as a woodworker and mariner. He's still at it, along with much of the Madeira family, including his two daughters who now wait on tables in the great dining room that overlooks Somes Sound.

Madeira's sister Janet helps in the office, and his brother Alan makes some of the finest wooden croquet sets in the nation. It is altogether a multi-talented family doing its best of behalf of one of the country's oldest summer hotels.

And there's a great deal that needs doing. The historic original building has 24 recently renovated guest rooms; the Philips House has six; and there are 13 house-

keeping cottages, either under towering pines or along the Somes Sound shore.

Fireplaces and stoves allow an extension of Maine's all-too-short summers, and the Claremont is becoming a favorite place for special events, weddings and late season conferences.

Now well into its second century, this landmark summer hotel gives every indication of sailing on into its third.

REGAL

From Page 25

Dana Phillips and his wife Clara. And in 1968, Dr. Phillip's son Lawrence sold to Allen and Gertrude McCue, of Yarmouth and Southwest Harbor. Their son William of Portland is the current owner.

Just three Maine families over 118 summers: this is surely one of the reasons the Claremont has maintained its particular magic for more