

Historic Beauty, Revitalized

by Nancy Ness

Several improvements return New Hampshire's Mount Washington Resort to its rightful place as a world-class property.

In 1991 New Hampshire's Mount Washington Hotel was purchased for \$3.15 million

at auction by MWH Preservation Limited, a group of New Hampshire businessmen. At the time, the group owned the historic Cog Railway. Now they also own the Mount Washington Golf Course, the Mount Pleasant Golf Course, Bretton Woods ski area and 950 acres bordering the hotel property, bringing the total acres owned to a whopping 1,250.

Before my recent visit this past fall, I had previously stayed at the resort in December 1999, the first winter that the hotel stayed open. The place was dressed for a Cinderella ball, sparkling with holiday festivities and decorations. Choosing to stay open through New Hampshire's harsh winters was a big commitment—and a wise decision. This is only one of a series of impressive changes made by MWH. The entrepreneurs have revitalized the historic property, turning it into a year-round resort of the highest quality.

The massive hotel has been restored and enhanced with the help of top interior designer Carleton Varney, who has lent his touch to the White House and many celebrity homes. This time I stayed in the Dorothy Draper room, which seemed like a landscape out of *Alice in Wonderland*. The room's furnishings include bright-red, wall-

to-wall carpet, turquoise walls, bold floral pattern fabric and a black-and-white tile corner with a hot tub. The windows are large enough to drive a Mack truck through them; the ceiling height would dwarf Michael Jordan. I had to climb three step-stool stairs to reach the bed. The room pays tribute to Dorothy Draper, a radical interior decorator of the 1930s and '40s.

Other improvements can be seen throughout the property. Bretton Woods has been expanded to become the largest ski area in the state and is often picked as one of the most scenic slopes in the East because of its white birch trees and views of Mount Washington (the highest peak in the East) and the hotel. Under way for 2006 is a pedestrian village by the base lodge. Additionally, the railway now stays open in the winter and runs ski trains up part of the mountain, making it possible to ski either an intermediate or beginning trail down 1,100 vertical feet.

The hotel has always been a stop-in-your-tracks gorgeous national historic site. Possibly one of the most photographed buildings in the Northeast, it was built in 1902 by Joseph Stickney, a Pennsylvania Railroad tycoon and New Hampshire native.

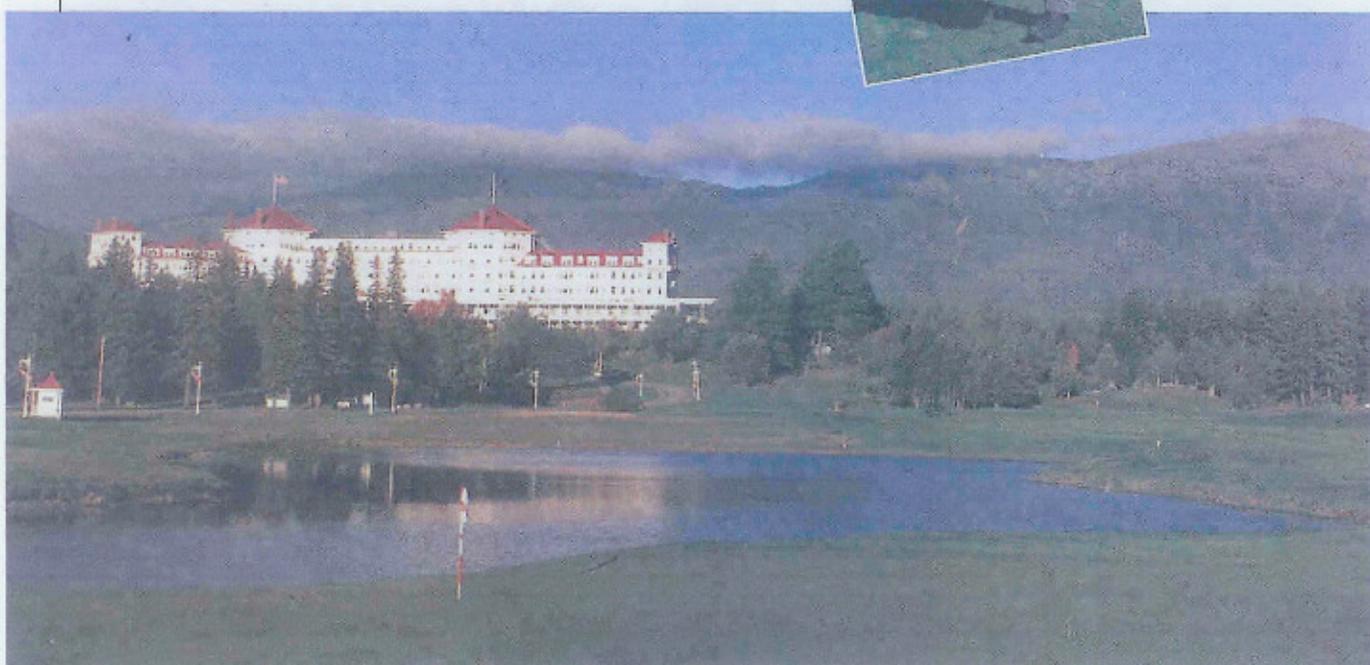
Golf plays an important part in the resort's character. The Mount Pleasant course, opened in 1895, is

a nine-hole links-style course (3,255-yards, par 35). Construction on an additional nine holes will be completed in 2008.

The 18-hole Mount Washington golf course was designed by the Scottish architect Donald Ross in 1915. The property also has a 300-plus-yard driving range, a nine-hole putting green and a new clubhouse with a full-service restaurant.

This recent trip served as my introduction to golf. I like sports that completely exhaust me, entail some adventure and take place in the wilderness. So it's not surprising that I found golf confining. It reminded me of bowling. However, the setting was spectacular, and I got a kick out of the state-of-the-art golf cart. It featured a screen with satellite technology that gives real-time information on distance to holes and hazards and offers tips from pros. The carts also can communicate with the clubhouse, so you can place an order with the bar or grill while still on the green.

Wilderness lies beyond the golf courses, and therefore every employee and club member has a tale about spotting a bear, moose or other wildlife frolicking on the green. My golf pro once was teaching a lesson when a black bear walked behind him and climbed a nearby tree. One



morning I just missed a moose crossing hole five. The hotel overlooks the golf courses, so seeing wildlife is a regular occurrence.

If you're like me and golf is not your thing, there are 12 beautifully maintained red clay tennis courts, four pools and a fishing pond. How about horseback riding? Need a lesson? You can get one on horseback riding, fly-fishing, skiing, tennis, golf and even photography.

I got a lesson in fly-fishing and in the process caught two little silver fish. Although I'd rather not touch a wriggling fish—of my two catches, one fell off the hook and the other was taken off for me—the lesson was enjoyable. Getting the rod motion down takes practice, and once you start to focus on moving the lure in the water, it all comes together. This is my type of sport: It happens in the wild and it's unpredictable.

Less active options include music concerts and weekly lectures. There are also special events such as the BodeFest Ski & Golf Challenge on April 28-30, hosted by Bode Miller, a native of New Hampshire, a World Cup champion, a multiple Olympic medalist

Lovely mountains and a golf course surround the Mount Washington Resort (below left). Bode Miller (left inset) is a regular presence at the resort, where guests can also work on their fly-fishing and tennis (above). The resort's interior (below) dazzles.



and the director of skiing at Bretton Woods. The low-key Miller regularly gets spotted on the golf course and slopes.

Other events include May's 30th annual Taste of New Hampshire, June's Flower Festival, a Fourth of July celebration and an August summer music series. The events are open to the public. For the full list, check the resort's Web site.

Food choices range from formal to pub fare. Crystal chandeliers and Tiffany stained-glass windows highlight the octagonal Grand Ballroom that houses the hotel's AAA Four Diamond-rated restaurant. For a taste of history, walk downstairs to the Cave, a Prohibition-era speakeasy. A rock tunnel leads to the secret hideout.

New Hampshire's "live free or die" state motto makes sense at the resort. It's an incredibly opulent setting with an unpretentious attitude. Kids roam the halls, and people feel perfectly comfortable in jeans in most places. It's easy to find things to do, or you can just relax in this fantastic setting. Don't forget to bring your camera. 

Mount Washington Resort at Bretton Woods:
800/314-1752; www.mtwashington.com

