

The Rest of the Story of Princeton as a Resort Town

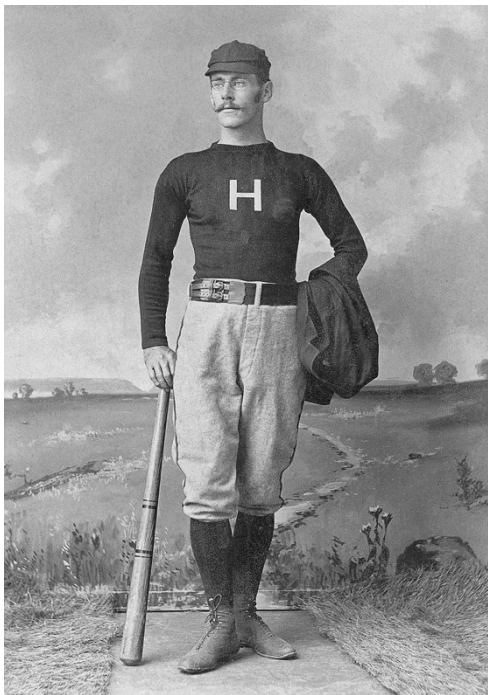
Harry C. Beaman, who wrote this article for the Historical Society in 1938, writes from personal experience and intimate knowledge of the hotel business in Princeton.

He was born in the Wachusett House in March 1863, son of the owner, Phineas A. Beaman. He grew up in the hotel and later became part of the P.A. Beaman and Son; who also owned the Summit House on the mountain. His duties were primarily in the Office, arranging for accommodations, transportation, and generally keeping the guests amused, entertained and happy. When the Wachusett House burned in 1910, he purchased the Prospect House or Princeton Inn and ran it himself for nearly ten years.

Thus, he writes with intimate knowledge of the Princeton Hotel business from approximately 1860 to 1930. (Mar 9, 1863 - June 5, 1947)

After 1904 there was one bathtub in the Wachusett House, on the ground floor, with the key at the Office desk!

Harry C. Beaman was President of the Historical Society in 1945 and 1946.



The Rest of Harry's paper from 1938

While the summer visitors came here because the scenery is beautiful, the air-cool and bracing and because there were no mosquitoes, that was true. Before all the trees along the ridge were cut out we may ask what they did for amusement. Perhaps they did not feel the need of so much, so called amusement, as people demand now. They came for healthful rest and were contented to play croquet and take rides around the surrounding country with walks up to Sunset rock near Mr. Hobbs present house is, or down Lover's Lane.

Bowling tenpins was a popular pastime with both men and women. As a boy I gathered in quite a bunch of small cash setting up pins – probably that was where the term “Pin” money originated. My pay was in paper fractional currency as no silver was then in use.

When tennis came that was enjoyed on a more or less smooth grass court in front of the Wachusett House and we had some interesting tournaments with players from all the hotels and from Worcester and Fitchburg. One player, Malcoln Chase, who later was well known in larger tournaments did some of his earlier playing here.

Evenings, there was some card playing in the parlors, euchre was the usual game or anagrams, but mostly quiet reading around the kerosene lamps with singing of Hymns around the piano Sunday evening. Usually everyone was in bed by ten o'clock except for Saturday nights, which was dance night at the Mountain House and at the Wachusett House as each had a hall over its stable. Real barn dances! Guests of the other hotels were invited and music provided by piano, violin and bass viol, (no horrible saxophone.) with ice cream, sponge cake and lemonade for refreshments. I can remember how all the girls were anxious to dance with the most popular Governor of Massachusetts, William E. Russell, when he attended one of Wachusett House parties.

Late in the 1890's when the game of golf was growing in popularity several of us hotel men talked over the possibility of having a golf-links here for the use of our guests. The Russell's and Walley's generously offered us a tract of their land with no rental charge, except that all of them and their guests should have free use of the course. Accordingly, we founded the Princeton Country Club incorporated under the State Laws of which Dr. C.E. Parker was the first President, M.C. Goodnow Vice President, R.J. Gregory Secretary and Treasurer. P.C. Doolittle, W.C. Davis and H.C. Beaman Executive Com. We engaged Peter Cronin of the Grafton Country Club to lay out a course of six holes, as that was all we had space for, and the game was on. Hardly any of us knew a putter from a driver, but we whacked away at a ball and tried to learn from sad experiences. As much of the course was rocky and crossed by many stonewalls, the ball often bounded back with danger to the player. It was real “Cow Pasture Pool.” But continued work in removing rocks and covering some of the walls with earth improved matters until we had a fairly good little course. In 1902 the little Club House was built and provided a center for many teas and parties.

Mr. Thomas Allen was planning to lay out a few practice holes on the grounds of his fine estate, “The Pines” at about the time we started our club but decided to join with us instead. He was soon elected President and by his energetic management and generous gifts to the club, insured its success. He provided a silver trophy known as the “Presidents Cup” to be played for in a yearly tournament until won three times.

The Club continued for about 20 years and was finally conquered by the Automobile. People could easily go to better courses. We used to say that Mr. John Marcom made the longest drive ever seen on the links. He drove around the course in his red-wheeled buggy. As Secretary for many years I am still receiving circulars to the Princeton Country Club.

A red-letter day for several summers was the time of the coaching parade in Rutland, when gaily decorated vehicles from many towns competed for the coveted blue ribbon. For a week or more before the event the ladies were busy with designs in fancy colors for covering the

coach and the harness of the horses, and often the result convinced the Judges that the first prize was deserved.

Mr. Doolittle was the popular driver, and by his fine handling of the four horses no doubt was a factor towards helping us to win. Who should ride on and inside the coach caused much planning and the committee in charge had to use a good deal of diplomacy in persuading the plainer girls to ride inside so that the pretty ones could have the more prominent seat. There were also some games of baseball the Princeton nine strengthened by the addition of young fellows boarding at the different hotels. In one game played in the '80's we had five players on our team who were members of College nines, and we gave a Leominster outfit such a trimming that they accused us of hiring professionals.

One or two summers we had the help of some Indian boys who families were camping here and selling baskets. Perhaps they were descendants of those who gave up Mrs. Rowlandson at Redemption Rock. The Indian campers had to leave, like their predecessors, because of neighboring farmers chickens did not come home to roost, or if they did, the roost would be vacant the next morning.

A welcome visitor for many seasons at the Wachusett House was Mr. William Langley of New York, a wealthy manufacturer of cotton good. His mills were in a town called Langley, near Aiken, S.C. He usually arrived July 3rd in a sort of converted barouche, with footman's seat built at the rear, with a team of six horses and a vehicle filled with his guests. All the bellboys and waitresses were most attractive to his every want for his tips were always gold pieces.

On July 4th, he had his colored valet fill a big punch bowl (now the property of Mrs. Herbert Houghton) with a most delicious and potent concoction of many liquors, fruit and strawberries, and invited all the guests of the house to partake freely. Few refused and by the afternoon the house appeared deserted, as nearly everybody was asleep. This was when Mr. Volstead was a mere boy. He "acted" later.

Mr. Langley always bought a supply of fireworks for the 4th, which his colored man set off with much proffered help by small boys. Once a bog rocket went askew and drove into a window of the Prospect House, but luckily no harm was done. Mr. Nathan Reed used to complain about rocket sticks in his mowing just down the hill.

On pleasant days Mr. Langley filled his vehicle with guests for rides to the surrounding towns, and first before his departure he always gave a costume ball for all the employees of the hotels, so you can easily see why he was so popular with everybody even the Proprietor. Mr. Langley brought the first tennis set to Princeton. It was of English make with the rackets curved in on one side, and the net strung with different colored tassels.

Others who came to Princeton with four horse coaches and much tooting of horns were Mr. James M. Anthony from New York and Mr. Harry Worcester Smith from Worcester.

Of the many summer cottages in Princeton most of the original builders came first as guests of the hotels and so much liked the town that they wanted homes here.

The first real summer cottage was that of Mr. A. G. Bullock which stood on the present location of Mr. Clarence Evans attractive house. Princeton has always been fortunate in the high-

class people who made it their summer home, both in hotels and cottages. The registers of the hotels have borne the names of men and women distinguished in many branches. Politics, The Army and Navy, The Church, Literature, Education, the Law and Business.

To name a few that I can remember; Secretary Stanton of President Lincoln's cabinet was here after the Civil War. Three Governors of Massachusetts, Long, Russell and Guild. Gov. Long was serenaded by the Princeton Cornet Band, our Mr. Ellsworth Howe leader, and responded in the usual well-chosen remarks. Senator Hoar of the U.S. Supreme Court spent at least one summer at the Mountain House. You perhaps have seen his picture with high praise of his services to the Court in "Bulwark of the Republic," in our Library. Judge Willard Bartlett of the New York Court of Appeals, whose family spent over fifty summers here. Did you read in a late Readers Digest of George Washington helping the firemen in Alexandria? Judge Bartlett did the same at the time of the burning of the Stuart Chair Shop in East Princeton. He took a turn at the hand pump and bore down manfully. Dr. Richard S. Storrs, the noted Brooklyn preacher, whose daughter married Mr. Phillip Washburn. When there came a rainy week here (of course we know that is "unusual") followed by a beautiful clear day Mrs. Storrs would remark, "Now this is Princeton weather." Dr George A. Gordon of the Old South Church; and Rev. H. Price Collier of New York.

Among prominent physicians, Dr. Buckminster Brown, Dr. C.B. Porter and his son Dr. C. A. Porter, who as a boy used to bring toads and snakes into the hotel, causing anxiety to many nervous ladies, Dr. Thorndike, Dr. Codman, and Dr. Homer Gage. There were many Army and Navy officers, Rear Admiral Selfridge, who has a halo of white whiskers around his cherubic face, making him look like anything but a man of War. Paymaster Thornton, who had a nose like a Peon probably caused by long service in the tropics. Com. Hamilton Perkins, who built what is now the Princeton Manor; Rear Admiral Colby who owner the lot on which Mr. Rockwood Bullock's house stands. The founder of Clark University, Mr. Jonas Clack, passed several summers here also one of the Harper's of Harper's Magazine. Robert Winsor and James Jackson Storrow financial magnates.

I can call to mind Mr. Charles G. Washburn of the Washburn and Moeir Co. heading with Mrs. Washburn the procession of seven children up to church every Sunday morning. Mr. A.G. Bullock, President of the State Mutual Co. whose sons have followed well his high standards of Achievement: Ernst Perabo, the eccentric pianist, who hired space in a barn where he could practice undisturbed: Sarah Woosley, who wrote under the pseudonym of Susan Coolidge, was built on the lines of William Howard Taft, and must have weighed at least 250 lbs. When her waitress came to the kitchen she used to say, "Heap it up its for Big Sarah."

Mrs. Charles Eames was a cultured woman who had lived much abroad and in Washington and could talk interestingly of the many prominent people whom she had met. Her occupation of a chair in a corner of the parlor was never disputed by any of the guests, but once I had to go in and remove a snappy pet dog, which had, taken possession. Mrs. Eames daughter married an Englishman named Gordon Cumming who was brother of Sir Gorgon Cumming who figured in the Baccarat scandal with the then Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII. Roland Hazard of Peacedale, R.I. was a Philanthropist who looked the part. He wore a gray suit and a tall white hat with long white hair down over his collar, much like Edward Everett Hale. Thomas Kinnicutt of Worcester who was a famous raconteur, both for parlor stories and other best suited for the men in the office. We know that the poet Whittier visited Princeton but not as a hotel

guest. He stayed at the Roper farmhouse, which stood half way down Mile Hill and wrote there the lines "From Wachusett to Monadnock." My cousin Gamaliel Beaman painted a picture representing the view described by Whittier, which now hangs in my house.

When we were without electricity after the recent hurricane in 1938, I brought out several kerosene lamps and was reminded that they were used in all the Princeton houses up to 1913. Filling with kerosene, trimming the wicks and cleaning the chimneys daily of all the lamps needed for a hotel was a good deal of a task and I know because as a boy it was one of my duties to help at this work. As night came on the boys made the rounds of the halls, lighting the bracket lamps, and carrying larger ones to the parlor tables. Some city people, who were accustomed to gas at home, were very much afraid of the kerosene lamps, but I can remember no serious accident from their use.

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This portion was not used in a talk and slide show by William "Bud" Brooks in his April 24th presentation entitled "Princeton as a Resort Town 1920 to 1930", but was included on the PHS website along with "Scribner's" article by Helen Hunt Jackson written in 1876 entitled "Hide and Seek Town"