

The Grand Hotels of Coos Co., NH

by Roger Rhoads

Shortly after the two recent articles on UX3s with Summit House and Crawford House, NH, cancels appeared in the *NEWS*, Don Garrett sent me a stack of over 20 covers with the corner cards of four of the grand hotels of the late 19th century including Fabyan House, Crawford House, Mt. Pleasant House and Twin Mountain House dating from 1881 to 1901. They were so attractive that I decided to put together a history of these wonderful vacation venues illustrated with the covers supplied by Don. The cancels were a bit ordinary being crossroads, targets and blobs with but two exceptions, so I've emphasized the delightful corner cards as a way of documenting the histories of the hotels.

Apparently the first big vacation hotel in the White Mountains was built by Horace Fabyan in 1837 when he opened the Mt. Washington House. Shortly after, in 1850, the Crawford House was opened. It was destroyed by fire and was re-built in 1859. The Mt. Washington burned in 1853 and was rebuilt as the Fabyan House in 1872 located at the foot of the cog railway. Both the railway and Fabyan House were built by Sylvester Marsh.

The railway up Mt. Washington was built in 1869 with the Summit House at its terminus as previously noted. Prior to that, in 1868 Asa T. and Oscar F. Barron, recognizing the economics of tourism in the area, joined together to build Twin Mountain House. By 1870 they had bought Crawford House, installing as its manager Sylvester Marsh.

FABYAN HOUSE, WHITE MOUNTAINS, N. H.

LINDSEY & FRENCH, Managers.



In 1873 they leased the new Fabyan House with Oscar G. Barron, son of Asa, as the manager. Railroads were completed in 1875 through the Crawford Notch, opening the hotels to even more vacationers.

With that in mind, the Barrons along with Cordeano H. Merrill in 1882 leased the Summit House and Mt. Pleasant

House that had been built in 1876. Together they eventually owned or leased Summit House, Crawford House, Fabyan House, Twin Mountain House and Mt. Pleasant House, virtually all of the grand hotels of the area. All had railroad stations located at their front doors and post offices in their lobbies as evidenced by their listings in the *Postal Guide* issues of the era.

The following illustrations show the progression of these ownership changes. Figure 1 is the upper portion of a cover dated 1881 with a double circle date stamp and a target killer showing that the Barron brothers now leased Fabyan House. By 1883, as shown in Figure 2, Merrill had joined the Barrons, and they now owned or leased all five of the hotels.

A medallion to the left is in the shape of a belted area and is printed with light brown ink. The same cachet was also used for Crawford House, Twin Mountain House and Mt. Pleasant House stationery with the hotel name in a Gothic font during the years up to 1894. Black ink was also used for Fabyan House with light olive ink for Crawford House, blue-black for Mt. Pleasant House and a darker brown for Twin Mountain House.

Progressively, the medallions also note the addition of Summit House in Figure 3 and, stepping out of the New England area, the purchase or lease of the Putnam House in Palatka, FL, in Figure 4 with Oscar G. Barron, son of Oscar F., being the proprietor.

The partnership apparently dropped the use of the belted medallion by 1894 and no longer owned Twin Mountain House. Asa Barron had died in 1888, so "Baron, Merrill & Barron" was not appropriate as reflected in "Barron & Merrill" within the corner card of the 1894 Fabyan House cover in Figure 5. By 1897 the corner card had diminished to simply "Fabyan House" (Figure 6). A new cachet for Fabyan House began to be used by 1899 as shown in Figure 7 with a very nicely engraved scene from the White Mountains.

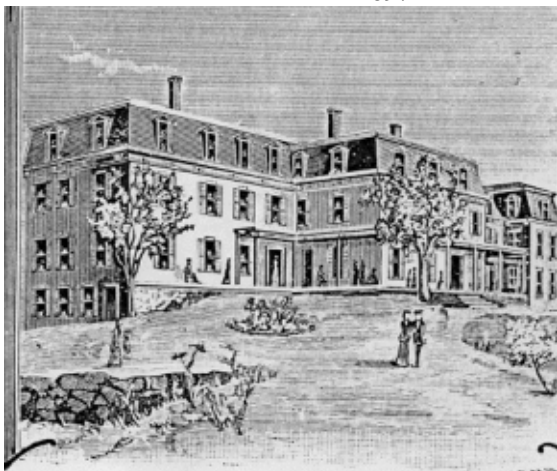


Crawford House. 1953

The earliest Crawford House cover in the stack was from 1883 in Figure 8. As this cover did not use the belted medallion, apparently it came into use between the dates of August 16 and September 18 as shown in Figure 2, but Barron, Merrill and Barron still were the proprietors. A cover with the

light olive medallion previously noted was dated "Sept." but with no year date. A 3¢ green Banknote was used for franking, so we can assume it was used prior to Oct. 1883 when the postage rate change was made.

By August 1891 the corner card again had changed with no medallion being used (Figure 9). "Barron & Merrill" is again noted, acknowledging the death of Asa Barron in 1888. Figures 10 and 11 show the same corner card with changes to the font used in "Crawford House" to 1897.



Mt. Pleasant House

As for Mt. Pleasant House, the earliest cover from Don is dated 1884 as shown in Figure 12 with a nice double circle date stamp and crossroads killer. Note "Barron, Merrill & Barron" is in the corner card. The belted medallion apparently was not being used at that time, but a new version showed up on the 1892 cover in Figure 13 with "Barron & Merrill" in it and missing Twin Mountain House, as it was owned at that time by the Asa Barron family. Later Barron & Merrill leased it once again.



Twin Mountain House

The last hotel visited is Twin Mountain House with a very nice belted medallion cover with a double circle date stamp and solid star killer dated 1883. The CDS and cancel are in light blue. The only other cover with a similar cancel is on a Crawford House cover from 1884 in black. Did the BM&B folks have a star cancel for each of their hotels for a period of time?

No belted medallion cachet was found for this hotel, but I feel rather certain that one should exist. Figure 16 is a strip of a cover from 1889 with no B&M reference, again evidence that

it was not owned by the partnership. Figure 17, on the other hand, has W. A. Barron as manager. The cover has no year date but is franked with a 2¢ carmine first Bureau issue that was issued in October 1894, so the cover was sent in 1895 or later. Though Barron & Merrill leased the Twin Mountain House sometime after the death of Asa Barron, I was not able to find the relationship of W. A. Barron to the families.

After Merrill died in 1908 and Oscar Barron in 1913 the Asa Barron family canceled the leases on Fabyan and Summit Houses and the B&M then had only Crawford and Twin Mountain for a number of years. Time was running out, and fire ravaged the Crawford, Twin Mountain, Fabyan and Mt. Pleasant Houses in the ensuing years, and with fewer moneyed vacationers they were not rebuilt. The rail lines into the notch were torn up, and today only Mt. Washington House built in 1902 remains of the Grand Dames.

As for the sources for the illustrations, Gil Levere supplied the post card of Crawford House. The others came from the Internet. Many thanks to Gil for sharing the card with us, and also to Don Garrett for the hotel covers he put aside for so many years.