

AN INN FOR THE PEOPLE, AT BEAR MOUNTAIN



PILED up at the foot of Bear Mountain is a rugged heap of boulders and huge chestnut logs that at first sight might be mistaken for a great moraine tossed from the brow of that great mountain when the world was young, by the gigantic force of earth. In reality, that great heap was but very recently built up stone by stone by the great constructive force of man. Men gathered together the scattered rocks and made of them a wonderful caravanserie, a place where people may come up from the city of New York and from all the smaller towns of this region and spend the day among the mountains that stand back, making way for the wide flowing Hudson River as it seeks the sea.

This picturesque inn is the outgrowth of the people's love and need of the outdoors. The city people enjoy sailing up the Hudson on the many convenient steamers, walking about in the mountains around West Point and eating their luncheon, brought from home, from some spot that gives them view of the river. As John Muir says, "Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and cheer and give strength to body and soul alike." The Palisade Interstate Park has long been a convenient place for people to retreat for a day's outing from the city. The commissioners had built a few rough shelters in that famous playground to which excursionists could retreat in case of unpleasant weather and where they could get that climax of a camp lunch—a cup of hot coffee. Those little cabins proved so inadequate, as the beauty of that region became better known, that a suitable shelter became a necessity. The situation is unparalleled for just such a beautiful and convenient picnic ground for the people. Directly below the inn is the steamer landing and the State highway leads motorists straight to the door. The southern windows of this Inn face the great playground and athletic fields, from the west windows the historic Hessian Lake can be seen and from the east the full expanse of the Hudson River.

Architecturally, this inn is a notable achievement both in design and construction. Every stone used on the face of the building was selected with the greatest of care. Moss covered, lichen-tinted stones were reserved for the choicest, most conspicuous places because their weathered beauty was appreciated and needed to carry out the natural, harmonious spirit of the place. Certain shapely stones were reserved for the arches and flat ones for coping and door sills. The rocks blasted from the foundation were used for the inner walls where strength was needed, but where the sharp angles of the blast could

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not mar the effect of natural weathered rock that was striven for. Special supervision of work was ordered and many an impromptu lesson given the masons on how to lay an artistic instead of a purely mechanical wall. The arches, two feet in thickness, were built upon a form, each stone held in stirrups, then further fixed by the concrete poured around them. The girders and columns are all steel, encased in hollow tile and finished with Colonial plaster.

The roof is of slate in graduated exposures, variegated widths and colors which gives it a pleasant, time stained, lichen-colored tone immensely suitable to the rustic style of the inn. The logs used so effectively are of chestnut, cut and saved from destruction when the blight threatened all New England's chestnut trees. They were logged from the forest that covers the hills immediately about. Those used in the dining room are fourteen inches in diameter, stripped. The heavy ends of all logs were used for outer posts, pillars and great beams and the smaller ends were split and sawed for trim or ornamental braces, so there was no waste. All the wood after put in place was given a coat of creosote and oil to preserve it and give the appearance of age.

The doorway we are illustrating shows the impressive, beautiful and simple result of the unusual care given in the selection of stones and rustic—an effect of naturalness not generally attained when stone and logs are used. The stones have not been marred by man's chisel, but were selected because they had been shaped by nature into beautiful forms and stained with storm and sun and moss as no stain or paint could hope to equal. The use of timber is simple in the extreme making a strong and enduring structure without being heavy and cumbersome. The window-boxes above with the trailing ivy, the great overhang of roof, the simple wrought-iron lanterns, combine in making a most impressive doorway.

A NOTHER object lesson in the combination of stone and logs is given in the detail on the second page. The artistic laying of the stones of the arches can better be realized in this picture. When little pine and cedar trees are planted in the place prepared for them and vines and creepers are climbing up to meet those reaching down from the window-boxes the effect will be pleasing in the extreme. The windows shown in this photograph are removed when summer demands more air, creating of the whole end of the second floor practically one great outdoor room—surely an ideal place to dine, up among the trees looking out at lake or river. One end of this room is devoted to the a la carte dining room, the other to the table d'hôte. The kitchen for these two is on the same floor.

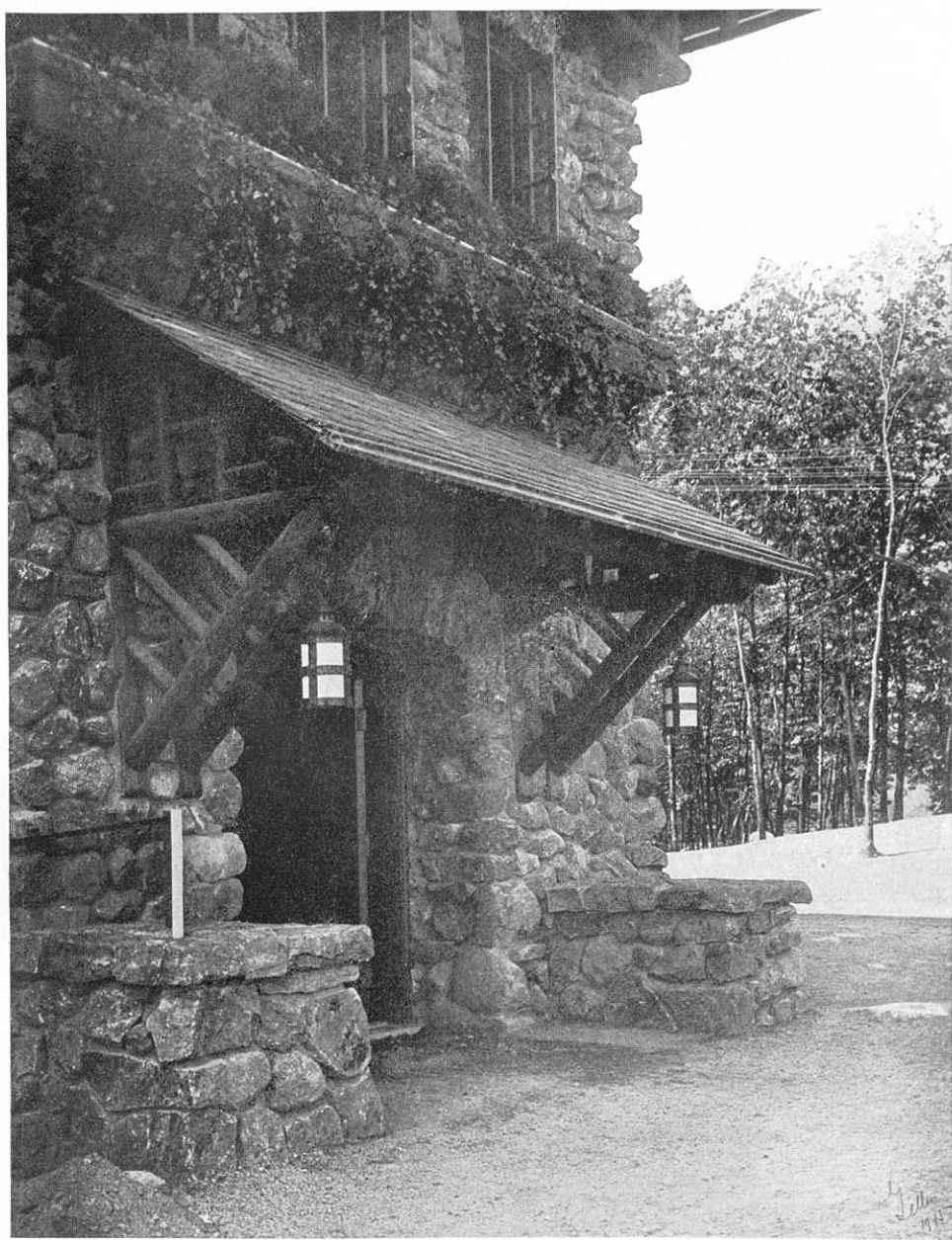
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In this outdoor dining room is an immense fireplace which is shown on the last of the pages that illustrate this article. A similar one is built at the other end of the same floor. This stone fireplace is six feet high and burns logs ten feet in length. The mantel has been split from one large tupelo or black-gum log. Andirons are of hammered iron and make one think that two friendly bears had come dancing out of their black cave when the cheerful warm fire was started. The davenport of split chestnut logs has been made comfortable with soft leather cushions. Fireside chairs of hollowed logs are novel as well as most suitable and comfortable for such a room. The lighting fixtures also are unusual in design. They are of white birch and hand hammered iron. The panelings of the walls and ceiling are of rough chestnut timber. Though the exterior of Bear Mountain Inn is rustic, the interior boasts the most up-to-date equipment for comfort and convenience to guests and facility in the preparation of food and service. The basement, blasted from solid rock, holds the refrigerating plant, cold storage rooms (they must be large because the inn is far from the center of supplies), the power and lighting plant, boiler, bakery, steam laundry, etc.

The first floor is a lunch room with its kitchen, and the office. Because people come in from all directions to this lunch room it has been placed barely above grade. The large lunch counter is curved to obtain the greatest possible space for serving. Here picnickers can come in for their coffee, tea, milk, pie, cake or whatever small thing they like to help out the lunch brought from home or they can sit at the small tables and chairs prepared for them and partake of the simplest, most inexpensive of lunches.

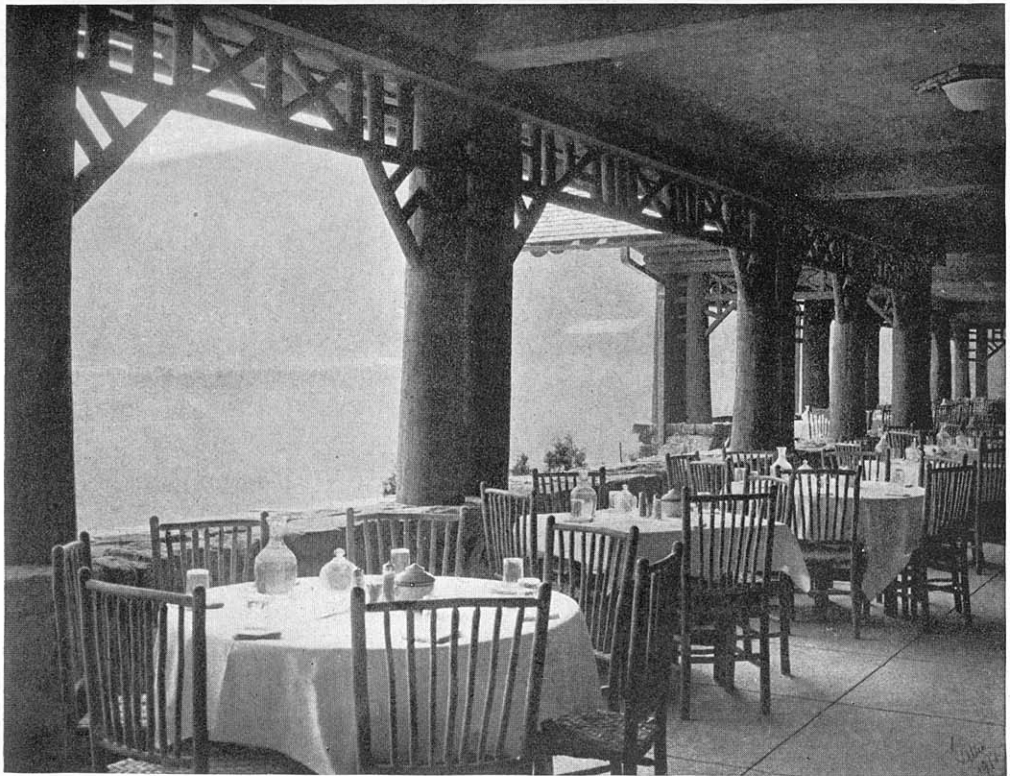
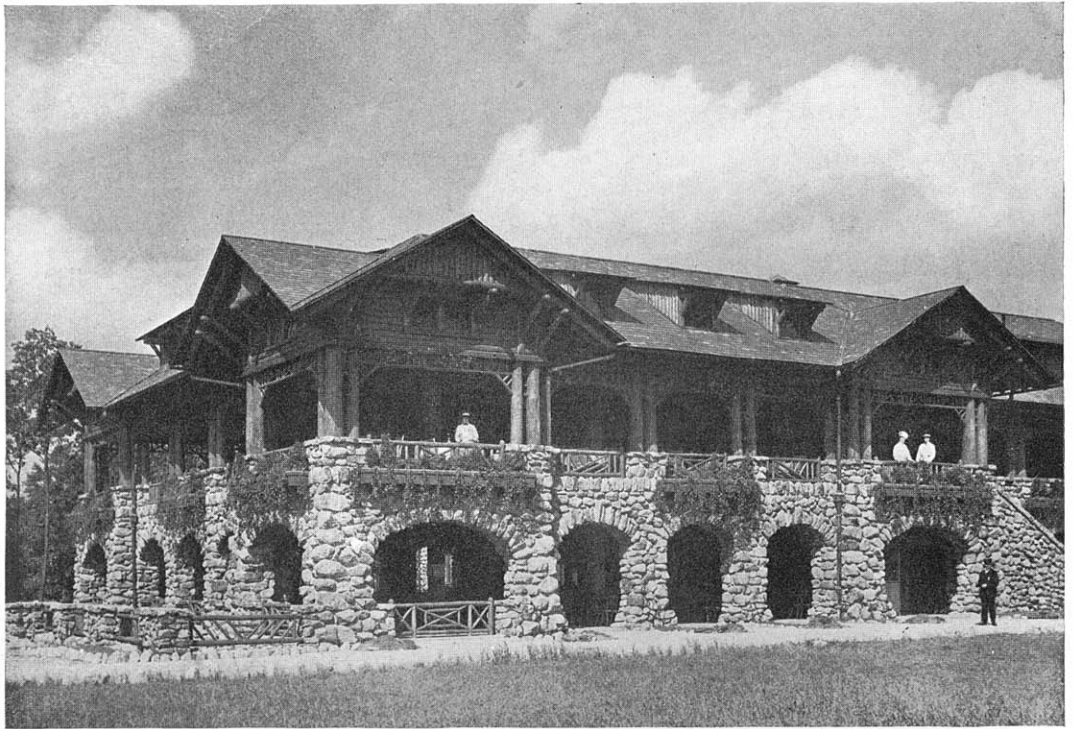
No provision has been made for over-night guests as the idea which has materialized in this inn was to provide people who are able to get out of the city for but a day's pleasure under the trees, with a place to rest in comfort while enjoying the wonderful pictures of the mountain, river and lake spread before them, give them a beautiful place to dine sumptuously, or a convenient place to obtain a small lunch or from which they may help out a little the luncheon brought from home.

This inn is a strong proof that people appreciate refinement and taste in the artistic construction of a building. Much of the pleasure of going to the Palisade Park is in seeing this building, sauntering along its wide verandas, resting on its comfortable chairs while contemplating the beauty of nature that surrounds them. Many people are unable to take long walks in the mountains or those that necessitate a steep climb, though they are eager to be in the midst of such beauty, see the sun on the trees, breathe the stimulating balsamy air



Tooker & Marsh, Architects.

AN INN AT BEAR MOUNTAIN FOR PEOPLE WHO love the country: This most picturesque entrance shows in detail the character of the building material which makes this inn one of the most artistic as well as popular in the country.



Tooker & Marsh, Architects.

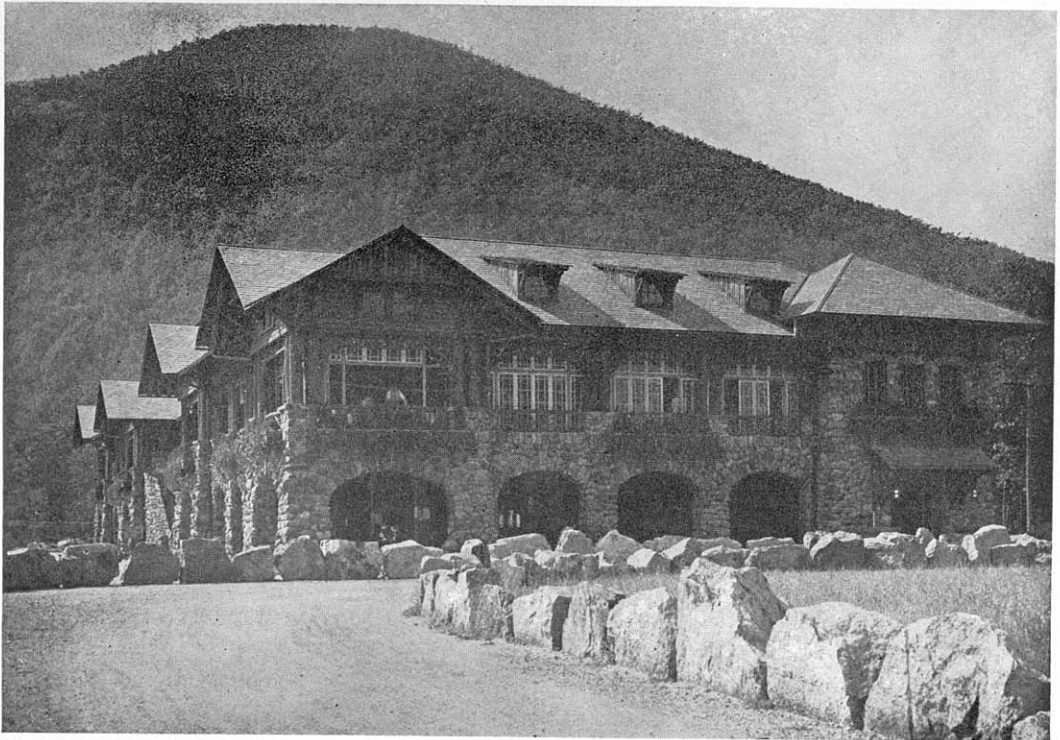
A GENERAL VIEW OF THE INN, showing an exceptional beauty of architecture: The archways on the lower floor of massive stone masonry are architecturally supremely well managed.

A GLIMPSE OF THE DINING PORCH OF THE INN AT BEAR MOUNTAIN: This overlooks the valley and the Hudson.

A DETAIL OF A corner of the inn showing the way in which the dining porch can be closed in with windows, also giving a close view of the lower entrance porch: Here people coming from the city can get a cup of hot coffee, ice cream, etc., to add to the basket lunch brought from home: Provision also has been made for those who wish an elaborate table d'hote dinner or meals a la carte: From each of these vast dining rooms views of lake or river may be had.



THE APPROACH TO the inn, giving an interesting view of the placing of the building against the mountain.





D E T A I L
showing the ceiling in the living room of the inn: The lighting fixtures are particularly appropriate to the room and interesting in material and color.

Chestnut logs used in the rough were cut from the surrounding forest and all the exposed parts treated with creosote and oil to preserve the wood and give a slight weathered appearance.

T H E F I R E - P L A C E in the living room, a fine bit of stone architecture with delightful rustic seats on all sides.



Tooker & Marsh, Architects.

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and see the velvety green tree garment that clothes the mountains. Much of the pleasure the people gain from their precious day in the beautiful mountains about West Point would be lost if this building, constructed for them, had been an ugly unsuitable barracks of a place. Such buildings are truly educational.

No finer opportunity for the display of architectural good judgment could be offered than the building of this inn, and the architects, Messrs. Tooker & Marsh, took advantage of it in the most inspired and inspiring way. It was in their power to construct a building monstrously out of keeping with its surroundings and purpose, and thus ruin the natural beauty of the place in which it was needed, as has so often been done with country inns. Fortunately for the State and for the people, they have justified the trust placed in them and created a building as staunchly beautiful and impressive as the mountains themselves, one that adds to the pleasure of the people as much as the country in which it stands, that ennobles rather than mars the superb union of mountain, river, trees and lake.

It would have been little short of an actual crime to have placed before people, who look forward for many weeks to the joy of a day's outing in the invigorating and inspiring outdoors, an unsightly building, one that would destroy the harmonious atmosphere of the woodland scene. Instead, they have given us a delightful object lesson in dignified, suitable design and construction that is of itself well worth coming out to see.

A building bearing the impress of the highest order of creative life—the mind of man—as Ruskin says, becomes noble or ignoble in proportion to the amount of energy of the mind that has been visibly employed upon it. Tooker & Marsh have impressed upon this structure of rocks and trees, minds sensitive to the spirit of nature. They have made it seem, as said in the beginning of this article, to be a creation of nature itself, for it is formed of the things already existing in the grove before it took shape. In texture, color and material it is actually an integral part of mountain and forest. It looks as though it belonged there—as indeed it does, by divine right, to give people joy of sight as well as minister to their convenience and comfort.