

## Chapter Three

# SELLING THE ALGONQUIN

*“I SHALL BE glad to answer any inquiry that may be made as to the beauty and healthfulness of St. Andrews and you have permission to use my name as a reference.” — Prime Minister Sir John Thompson, 1892*

**A**S THE OWNERS of a first-class hostelry, the St. Andrews Land Company made a pitch to attract a first-class clientele. In its 1889 pamphlet it serves notice that, “The summer population of St. Andrews is happily free from the boisterous element so common at seaside resorts near large and populous cities. Though not exclusively an intellectual or aristocratic gathering, shining lights in all professions are there aplenty, and the whole is like an excellent salad, where each condiment is just sufficiently represented as to be apparent, yet of not too strong a flavour, and the whole a delight to the most Epicurean taste.”

The company’s efforts paid off. A CPR poster for 1893 depicting what seems to be stereotypical residents of its various stopping places shows the representative of St. Andrews decked out in a pinstriped suit and monocle, obviously very much one of the “better class.” This poster draws heavily on the presence in town of Sir Leonard Tilley and Sir Charles Tupper, but also on the Algonquin’s redoubtable clientele, which indeed did include captains of industry, Harvard professors, editors of major newspapers, distinguished surgeons and judges.

One of the most ostentatiously wealthy vacationers who patronized the Algonquin in its early years was Louis Cabot of New Hampshire. He arrived for the summer of 1895 in his own Pullman with a man-

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CPR Posterboys, 1893. ROSS  
MEMORIAL MUSEUM

OPPOSITE *Algonquin Indian  
Head*. PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES  
OF NEW BRUNSWICK

servant, a maidservant, and two negro boys to care for his railway car while it accumulated parking charges of fifty dollars per day at the station. It was estimated that Cabot paid the equivalent of eighteen fares for his vacation at the Algonquin. Another guest, Charles Bonaparte, an Algonquin diehard from the beginning, was the grandnephew of Napoleon I, a member of the Teddy Roosevelt cabinet as secretary of the navy and as attorney general, and an overseer of Harvard University. With all these credentials, he still found time to put up his feet at the Algonquin almost every summer until his death in 1921.

Prime Minister Sir John Thompson and his family visited the Algonquin in 1892. His youngest daughter Frances, nicknamed Frankie, was possessed of a vivacious and winning personality but afflicted with an obscure illness which required her to use a cane. One day she seemed suddenly on the point of death, and a telegram was sent to her father in Ottawa. A doting father and devoted family man, Thompson arrived as fast as train wheels could turn, remaining by Frankie's bedside for several days until the crisis had passed. The incident was recalled movingly upon Thompson's death two years later.

Robert Borden stayed at the hotel on a number of occasions, the last during his tenure as prime minister. His visit was marked by an emergency as well, a pale green one. During a tour of the golf links he was possessed of some sort of malady, perhaps brought on by the stress of the job. In a piece that seems to have been some sort of attempt at humour, the *Saint John Times* reported that at the seventeenth tee the Prime Minister looked up to see a "pale green emergency" staring reproachfully at him from the woods. "The great man's knees were loosened. He was greatly shaken, and after a hurried consultation it was decided to cut out the seventeenth and eighteenth holes and to play the 'nineteenth' three times to make up for the others. Later news from the scene of this untoward occurrence will be awaited by the public with some anxiety. It is feared there will be no rest for the Prime Minister while the Emergency remains at large."

There is a tantalizing but unproven story that Ellen Terry, a contemporary of Sarah Bernhardt and Isadora Duncan, and the greatest Shakespearean actress of her day, was "stabled" at the Algonquin by her lover, a CPR executive. There are other juicy bits of gossip, and it would be easy to multiply names indefinitely because the list of summer guests at the Algonquin was a gossip column in itself. Local people would have been familiar with those names before they came to St. Andrews and would continue to follow their careers long after they left.

THE ALGONQUIN WELCOMED millionaires but it also made provision for less affluent clients as well. Rooms were divided into four categories, accord-

ing to size and view and whether they had a fireplace or closet. The biggest and best rooms were located either on the first floor, near the dining room and parlour, or on the second and third floors, where they had either a veranda or a corner view over the bay or the cove. The less expensive rooms were the small rooms on either side of a hallway upstairs. The fourth floor was the equivalent of steerage, with slanting ceilings and no washroom facilities. There was a sliding rate scale for all classes of rooms, broken down into single and double occupancy per day or longer period, with lower rates during the September off-season. The 1889 brochure notes that local livery services could be had for “phenomenally low rates,” and provides the average price for a fishing excursion, two dollars per day “for canoe and Indian.” The hotel was not above putting overflow clients up on cots or even outdoors, as it did during a sudden boom in August 1890.

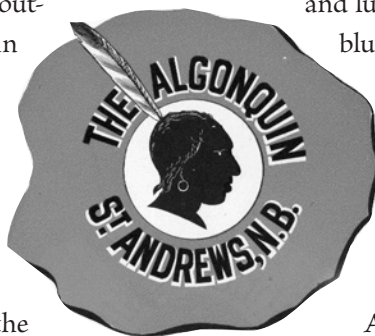
Among those looking for less expensive accommodations were excursionists, often working-class vacationers who bought group travel and lodging packages. Unlike the wealthy Cape Arundel resort development on the Maine coast, which stated bluntly in its 1886 promotional literature that it had taken every precaution “to guard against an invasion of excursionists,” the Algonquin was never so elitist. One of the excursion groups it hosted most frequently was the Raymond and Whitcomb group of Boston. The group took a three-week swing through the Maritimes in the summer of 1889, including the Algonquin in its itinerary and praising it as a modern hotel with all the improvements. The Raymond group returned almost every year for several decades and seems to have been at the high end of the excursion market. The group travelled in Pullman palace cars, which probably did not have the tiny towels and unlockable washroom doors complained about by travellers on the New Brunswick and Canada Railway.

Day trippers from Eastport and Calais made up

another form of excursionist. They would come down in the *Rose Standish* or *Arbutus*, stroll through the town, and lunch at the Algonquin or Kennedy’s. Some of these groups were four hundred strong and some were accompanied by a band. The assumption that the excursionists were not visitors of the most refined taste was illustrated humorously in an 1891 anonymous piece to the *Pittsfield Sun* titled “The President’s Vacation: His Travels, Pleasure and Adventures.” The voyage described began at Calais, aboard the *Rose Standish* with a cargo of eager pleasure seekers and a load of huge granite blocks. The President was entranced by the bay, which he likened to the Bay of Naples, though disappointed that it should be called the “Pesaka,” his misconstruction of Passamaquoddy. He would have called it “Holiday Haven.” After a lazy stroll up to the hotel and lunch on the Algonquin piazza, where the

blue of the bay mingled with the blue of his cigar smoke and the strains of the orchestra floated out from the parlour, the President regretfully took his leave. “A very good dinner indeed,” he remarked to Captain Ryan of the *Rose Standish*, as he talked with him about the Algonquin. “I should say so,” returned the captain, “and if you will be kind enough to sit in the middle of the boat she will not be so apt to run on one wheel.” The President had indeed eaten well at the hotel, but he resented the imputation that he had weighted himself to such an extent that he could be used as ballast for a big ship.

From the beginning the Algonquin hosted meetings and conferences. An important July 1890 event was the annual meeting of the New England General Passenger and Ticket Agent’s Association, whose membership was a who’s who of railroad men and included several St Andrews Land Company executives, among them F.E. Boothby and Robert S. Gardiner. An excursion party of Massachusetts pressmen met at the hotel in 1893. The Association of Maine Druggists, 350 strong, sojourned at the Algonquin in 1912 for three days, and in the same summer the Appalachian Club





*Waterfront, 1889. Two ghosts of the old West India trade—the Mary Ellen and the H.V. Crandall—lie rotting on the sand. Eyesores to the locals, these old schooners were “objets d’art” to many a visiting painter. They were put out of their misery in 1894, one being dismantled, the other towed out to Navy Island. CHARLOTTE COUNTY ARCHIVES*



of Boston, 150 strong, stayed for six days.

Local people also came to the hotel. Although the Algonquin was created mainly to cater to New England vacationers and in the first decade of operation over sixty percent of its business came from south of the border, the Algonquin attracted many visitors from neighbouring communities such as Fredericton, Saint John, and Eastport. Local people had been coming to the town in increasing numbers since the railway was built and local business picked up in the 1870s. By the time the Algonquin opened there was also substantial demand from the weekend tripper.

THE PROMOTERS OF the Algonquin cast their nets as widely as possible, welcoming various economic classes and also special interest groups such as nostalgia tourists. Developing alongside industrial expansion, with its noise, pollution, and class strife, was a keen interest in the quaint and old-fashioned. This sometimes led to a search in the summer months for “old” New England. Some tourists were content to see in poverty and economic failure signs of a simpler time in harmony with nature, a kind of antidote to the malaise of modernity. Only a few years earlier, writes Dr. Dona Brown

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in her excellent 1995 book, *Inventing New England: Regional Tourism in the Nineteenth Century*, tourists had shunned such backwaters, but now were developing a distinct taste for them. New England began to be marketed as a kind of living museum, and colonial New England was being re-invented as a time of virtuous independence and class harmony.

There was a particular interest what Brown calls the “ghost of the old West Indies trade,” the echo of a happier time when bustling wharves did a stiff business in the triangle trade with Britain and the Caribbean. An 1889 article in the *Boston Home Journal* noted that “Not only is the place [St. Andrews] picturesque in its surroundings, it has a flavour of romance about it, and is the ruins of a once lively shipping port now passed into a dream with only a few decaying hulls or pleasure craft seen at its docks.” Decay was now a marketable commodity, and the Land Company was not averse to selling it. In its 1889 pamphlet it laments rather disingenuously that “Alas, there remains today nothing of this far-reaching commerce save here and there a vessel, long-condemned, falling with the unused wharf at which it lies into dilapidation, in its decay most picturesque.” That inveterate traveller Samuel Adams Drake swung through the area in 1888, reporting the next year in *The Pine-Tree Coast* that in St. Andrews one sees “those unmistakable symptoms of decay that seem so peculiarly adapting to the demands of a watering place.”

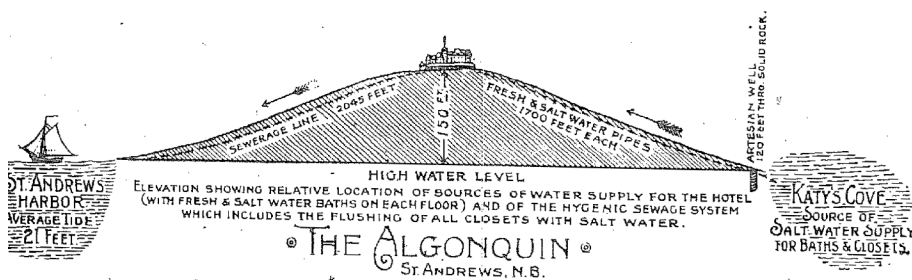
One special interest group that no hotel could neglect was the seeker after health. From the beginning the Algonquin was marketed as a center for rejuvenation as well as relaxation. In its 1889 pamphlet the Land Company devoted a special section to “St. Andrews for Health,” a mixture of truths and half-truths typical of its day. Among the hotel’s outstanding qualities were its excellent drainage, with sewers falling directly into the bay at a pitch of 7.5 degrees and tides that removed the waste far from shore. Mosquitoes

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“A more beknighted town than St. Andrews does not exist in the Lower Provinces. We have now three knights on our tax list,—Sir Leonard Tilley, Sir Donald Smith, and last though not least, Sir William Van Horne!”—St. Andrews Beacon, 1894.

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DRAINAGE AND WATER SUPPLY THE VITAL SAFEGUARDS.



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A diagram of the Algonquin’s “perfect system of sewerage.” Clean water arrives up a steep grade from Katy’s Cove, and effluent falls at an equally steep pitch near the bathing beach at the blockhouse. 1889 promotional pamphlet. GEORGE MATTHEWS

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AN UNANSWERABLE ARGUMENT OF HYGIENIC EXCELLENCE.

**W**E HAVE RECEIVED one of two hundred and fifty thousand copies of a pamphlet which has recently been published on St. Andrews by the Land Company. It is printed on a finely finished tone paper and is profusely and beautifully illustrated. The first page of the cover bears a splendid picture of the Algonquin hotel, as it will look on the first of July with its broad verandahs thronged with guests. Among the illustrations are Joe's Point, Chamcook Lake, St. Andrews light-house, an arm of Passamaquoddy Bay, St. Andrews from Fort Tipperary, the river front, a view from Chamcook mountain, scenes in and near Indian Park, Welsh Lake, the old block house and a variety of other charming pictures. The letter press is written in a romantic vein and describes very minutely the advantages and picturesque delights which have made St Andrews so popular a summer resort. Mr. Holman D. Waldron, of Portland, Maine was the writer, we believe, and he has done his work well. These pamphlets are being circulated all over the North American continent.  
—St. Andrews Beacon, May 30, 1889. ~

and malaria were unknown, the town was hay fever free, and mortality statistics showed St. Andrews to be healthier than New York, Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, Montreal and Toronto, as well as Bar Harbor and Newport.

There was a good deal of promotional rhetoric at work in the so-called mortality figures. The publishing of mortality statistics, a common practice at English seaside resorts for some time, worked to the advantage of the new kid on the block. As a resort acquired a name sick people would flock to it in increasing numbers, thereby driving up the incidence of death. That is probably why, in the early days, St. Andrews had a lower figure than Bar Harbor, and Bar Harbor from Newport.

On the other hand, St. Andrews a century ago probably did have in its system of sewerage a distinct advantage over many cities and towns. Few could boast a gradient of 7.5 degrees. Winnipeg had a very flat fall of only one foot in over a thousand. Sewers in most North American cities emptied directly into nearby lakes and streams, and medical science was now beginning to see a connection between poor sewerage and outbreaks of diseases like cholera. In 1876 a local sanitation expert described Boston harbour as a vast cesspool and a threat to all the towns around it. City engineers in Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa and Vancouver reported similar conditions. Stories of the sewers in London and Paris, where effluent ran uphill or through right-angle drains, had become legendary. Vacationers would have had good cause to see in the Algonquin's steep outfall an added safeguard against disease.

As for malaria, today it is thought of as an exclusively tropical disease, and the brochure's reference to the town as being free of it may at first seem odd, but malaria was still quite a common disease in North America in the nineteenth century. In fact, in 1889, the year the Algonquin opened, a report was made to the Canadian Medical Association that malaria was endemic in the Northwest Territories. At that time the disease was often called ague, fever of the country, or fevernager. Before the discovery that the disease was caused by a parasite carried by the anopheles mosquito, its cause was often attributed to the bad air over swamps and low-lying wetlands, hence its name. The brochure reference to mosquitoes is purely coincidental. Most of the guests who came to St. Andrews probably believed that the curative power of sea air kept malaria at bay.

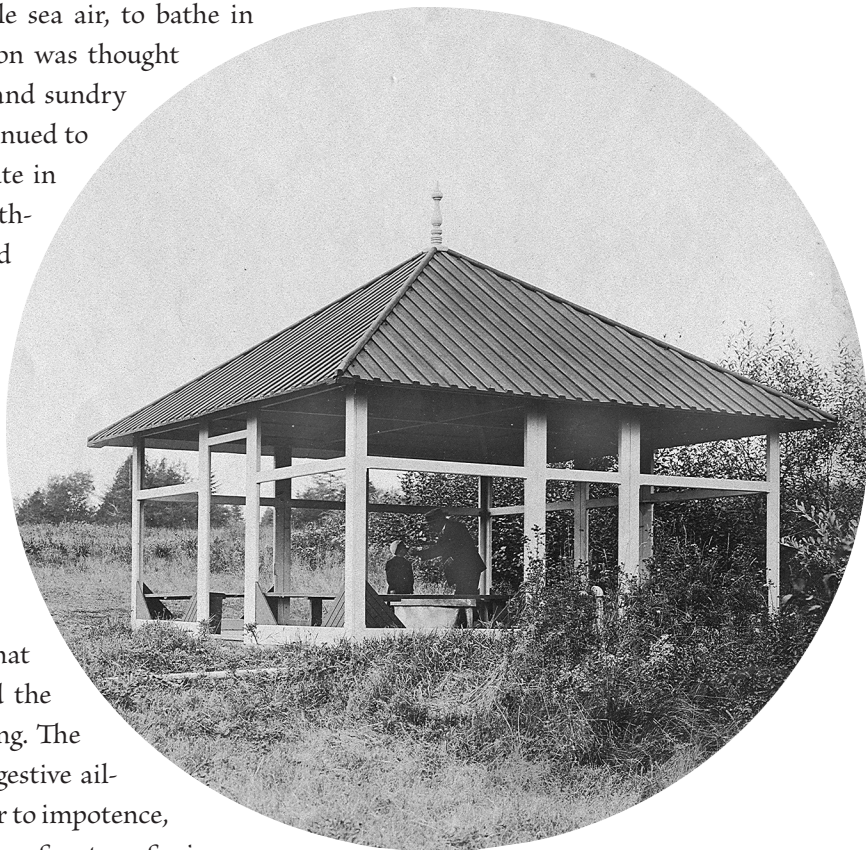
The Algonquin also advertised healthy hot and cold saltwater baths. Each tub had two sets of taps, two for hot and cold freshwater, and two for hot and cold saltwater. It is difficult today to appreciate the almost magical qualities attributed to saltwater and sea air in the nineteenth century. It had begun in Scarborough, England where a physician who owned a stretch of beach publicly advertised his saltwater as having the same healing powers as his nearby mineral spring. Over the next century zealots flocked to

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the seaside in exponential numbers to inhale sea air, to bathe in and even to drink seawater. This combination was thought to ward off cholera, hay fever, tuberculosis, and sundry diverse other illnesses, and many guests continued to visit St. Andrews every summer to recuperate in the healthy seaside environment. Because bathing facilities were limited, the water cold, and some guests too infirm or too modest to attempt the waters of the bay itself, saltwater baths in the hotel were an attractive extra. In 1889 a bath cost twenty-five cents, the same price as the rental of a horse and carriage. They were therefore still fairly expensive, and in 1889 the Algonquin would have been offering a first-class treat by providing saltwater in its bathrooms.

Mineral water was a niche market that no health resort could afford to neglect and the Algonquin soon offered its own mineral spring. The belief that spa water would cure skin and digestive ailments, and a host of other diseases from cancer to impotence, had gone unchallenged since the Middle Ages. Saratoga Springs, America's first resort town in the northeast, had been a health resort based on mineral waters since the first decade of the nineteenth century, and Canada had springs as well. By 1873 Ontario had three springs of note, St. Catherine's Wells in St. Catherines, Plantagenet Springs in Prescott County, and Caledonia Springs near Carillon. The Caledonia Springs Company had been in operation since 1838 and was known as the "Saratoga of the North." The CPR also added Banff Springs to its hotel chain in 1888.

The Algonquin's Sampson Spring was behind the hotel off the Cemetery Road on the old Sampson property. How the water of the Sampson Spring differed from ordinary well water might have mystified some of the local people, but that did not stop the Land Company from promoting its healing powers or deter guests from having it delivered to their rooms, quaffing it at meals, and taking it home with them in bottles. The Land Company had been using the spring since 1895, when it began to advertise the availability of spring water at its tables. In 1898 Gardiner and D.B. Clafflin bought the Sampson property and built a granite coping around the spring with the intention of making it one of the hotel's chief attractions. Unfortunately, Gardiner died the following year and the project fell temporarily into abeyance.



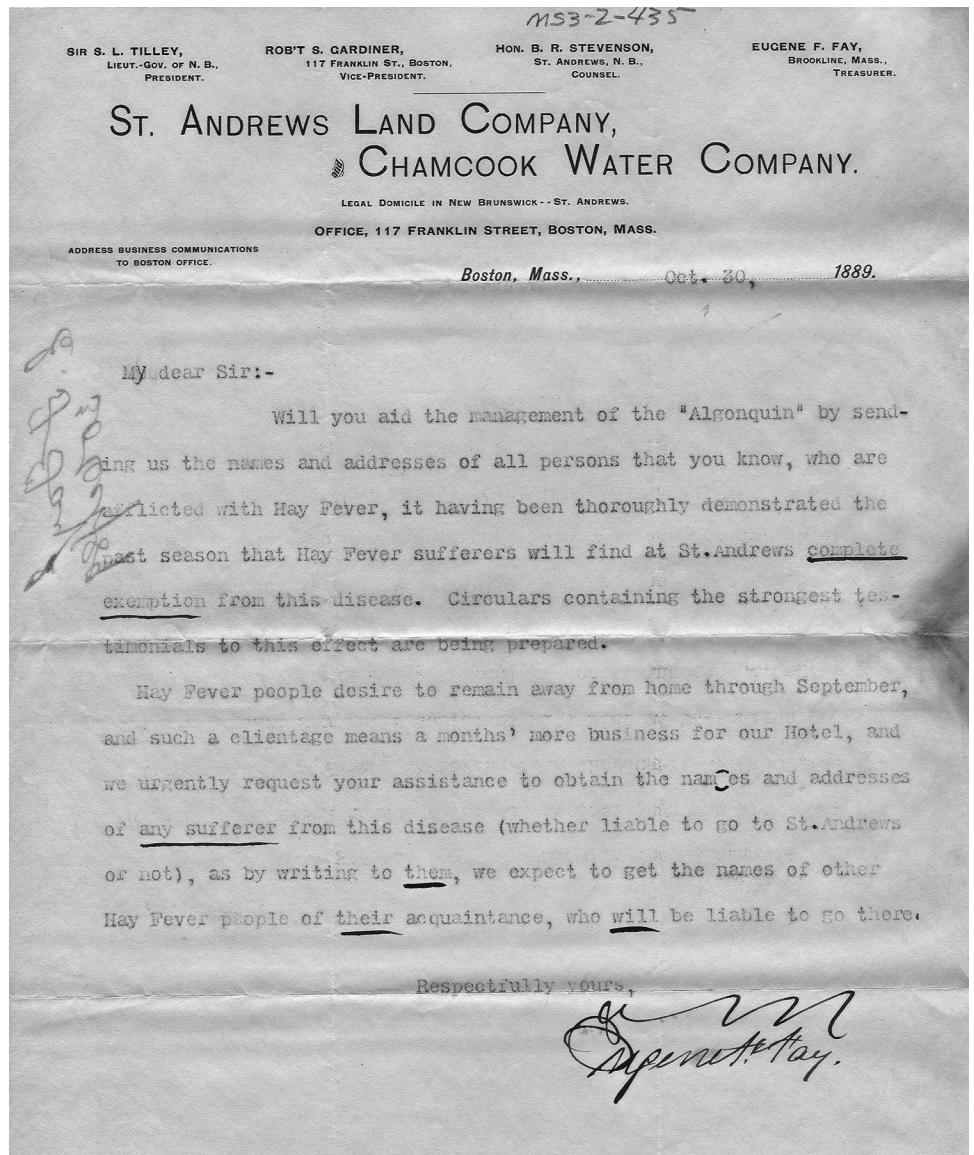
*Sampson Spring was located behind the Algonquin off the Cemetery Road. An ordinary well to most of the locals, it became a source of health to many a dyspeptic visitor. In this promotional photograph, a gentleman offers a drink of the healing draft to a small child. CHARLOTTE COUNTY ARCHIVES*



THE ALGONQUIN

Letter from Land Company  
Treasurer Eugene Fay solicit-  
ing testimonials. B.R. Stevenson  
Collection, CHARLOTTE  
COUNTY ARCHIVES

The Land Company made a con-  
certed effort in 1890 to attract the  
lucrative hay-fever clientele, includ-  
ing a promotional brochure featuring  
a plethora of testimonials by visitors  
and locals alike as to the marvellous  
healing properties of St. Andrews air.  
The result was a kind of hay-fever  
madness that lasted a decade.



THE "HAY-FEVERITES" were the most conspicuous of all the visitors that came to the Algonquin for health reasons. Their running noses and watering eyes inevitably drew attention to them and they became an object of special attention in the local paper, a mixture of pity and amusement. The *Beacon* reported that fifteen were quartered at the Algonquin in August 1890 and that there was also a large number at the Argyll.

For at least a decade sufferers from hay fever had been frequenting the coastal resorts of New England, and the Campobello Land Company had been advertising its hotels as free from the disease. No one in St. Andrews seems to have given it much consideration until 1888, when the ambitious

and trendy promoters of the St. Andrews Land Company arrived. An 1888 piece in the *Newton Graphic*, in Gardiner's hometown, noted that St. Andrews was said to be a locality exempt from "that pernicious and semi-fashionable disease, 'hay fever.'" Almost overnight St. Andrews became known as a hay fever exemption area. "No Hay Fever Here" appears prominently at the top of the 1889 Land Company pamphlet. The Argyll quickly followed the trend, as did the various transportation companies serving the town, and by the mid-1890s the hay fever boom was in full swing.

Hay fever sufferers were excellent for business because they visited largely in the last part of August and first part of September, thereby extending the hotel season for at least several weeks. The Land Company made a special effort to attract more of the hay fever folk for the summer of 1890. Eugene Fay wrote B.R. Stevenson to ask if he would help the management of the Algonquin by sending them the names and addresses of all persons he knew who were afflicted with hay fever, since it had been thoroughly demonstrated during the past season that hay fever sufferers would find complete exemption from the disease at St. Andrews. He mentioned that circulars containing the strongest testimonials to this effect were being prepared and stressed the benefit of the extra September business for the hotel. Fay hoped that by writing to known hay fever sufferers he would obtain the names of others similarly afflicted.

Taking his letter at face value, it would seem that the company believed its own rhetoric. In its 1890 Algonquin pamphlet the company asserted "beyond possibility of contradiction" that during the summer of 1889 "in not one single instance did the disease appear, and in the case of those who came when they were suffering, entire relief was apparent within twenty-four or forty-eight hours." There followed a full page of testimonials, led by that of a local doctor, as to the marvellous curative effect of St. Andrews on this pernicious malady.

The hay fever madness reached a kind of crescendo in St. Andrews in the last decade of the nineteenth century. The newspaper was packed with miraculous testimonials. It was noted that hay fever sufferers could ride, drive, walk, fish, and keep flowers directly in their rooms with nary a twinge. Before the discovery of antihistamines nobody knew the cause of hay fever immunity, although theories were legion. Local physician Dr. Gove put it down to the excellent drainage of the soil, though he conceded that the pure salt air or presence of evergreen trees might have something to do with it. Hay fever was also thought, somehow, to be a fashionable disease. According to US writer Octave Thanet, "hay fever attacks the most genial, sweet tempered, witty and personally attractive people; until we ran into the hay fever sufferers here this interesting fact in neurology had escaped us entirely."

The hay fever rage actually enjoyed a fairly short life in the town as an

#### KILLED BY A HOTEL BILL

*He didn't rock a boat, or show  
His small son how to swim,  
He didn't shoot a mammoth bomb  
That tore him limb from limb,  
He didn't light the kitchen stove  
At dawn with kerosene,  
He didn't light his pipe inside  
A powder magazine,  
He didn't wander for a walk  
Upon the railroad track,  
He didn't go to hunt the pole  
And never more come back,  
He got his seaside hotel bill  
And when the same he read  
He stood beside the sounding surf  
And quietly fell dead.  
— Portland Oregonian, 1901 ~*

## THE ELLEN TERRY MYSTERY

**O**LIVE HOSMER WAS the daughter of Charles R. Hosmer, the head of the CPR's telegraph department and among Canada's richest men. An early guest at the Algonquin, he built a magnificent cottage called "Hillcrest" next door. One day Miss Hosmer summoned Bob Wright, the nephew of her trusted housekeeper, May Spurge. She delivered a little lecture on the terrible harm a man's mistress wreaks on a family, citing by way of proof Ellen Terry, whom she said her father had once "stabled" at the Algonquin. She then produced a handsome diamond ring, the inside inscription of which read, "C.H. to my sweet Nell," and gave it to Wright, whose wife wore it until her death.



ELLEN TERRY (whose nickname was Nell) toured both the United States and Canada on numerous occasions, and Hosmer was a noted womanizer and a patron of the arts. Even so, neither Terry's correspondence nor biographies of her makes any mention of Hosmer or St. Andrews, and the ever-vigilant local press is equally silent on the subject. Ms. Hosmer's testimony aside, it is also possible that the "Nell" referred to on the ring was Nellie Meleba, Australian opera singer of note and, as Mrs. Walker notes in *No Hayfever and a Railway*, a friend of Mr. Hosmer. *~*

avenue for tourist revenue. Gradually, the notices of hay fever exemption were printed in smaller letters and their locations changed to less conspicuous parts of the brochures and ads for the Algonquin and other hotels. By 1896, golf had begun to take over as the Algonquin's chief special attraction and by 1897 no further mention is made of hay fever in the local ads. In a lavish 1913 CPR pamphlet hay fever is not mentioned. The hay feverite might still be coming to the Algonquin and St. Andrews, but the promoter no longer seemed to feel a need to make a special pitch in his direction and the hay fever fever, if you will, seemed to have run its course. *~*



*Ellen Terry, 1886*

## THE SLEEPING BEAUTY MYTH

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY metaphor was a favorite with promoters and tourists alike. It was flattering to believe that the attentions of summer visitors had rescued tiny seaside towns like St. Andrews from oblivion. The following poem appeared in *Butler's Journal* around 1890:

When summer comes and calls to light  
The sleeping verdure of the lea,  
The dormant pulse throbs move in strife,  
Of old St. Andrews by the sea.  
Her citizens once more come forth  
And sun themselves upon the street;  
And gossip 'bout the visitors  
With every one they chance to meet.

Strange expectations call them forth  
All drest up in the latest style;  
They walk around the great hotels,  
The swell Algonquin gay Argyle.  
Hay fever folk will soon be there  
With boodle meet to pay their fee;  
Oh! this is what has stirred the heart  
Of old St. Andrews by the sea.

As dying millionaire is blest  
By relatives exceeding kind,  
So every man and woman tries  
By art and cunning well combined,  
To draw the roasting foreigner  
From climes of unrelenting heat,  
To rusticate a few short months,  
Within their ever cool retreat.

They come, and lo the grand array,  
The town reflects their glinting cash;  
Gay parties roam through every street,  
And carriages along them dash,  
On broad piazzas of hotels  
The belle is flirting with the dude;  
And everywhere society  
Seems to have banished solitude.

So, through the scorching summer months  
The livery stable man is gay:  
His horses and his carriages  
Are never idle night or day.  
By day the guest looks idly forth  
Upon the tossing sunlit seas—  
Braced up against a Quoddy gale,  
The swell New Yorker takes his ease.

They go! and all the revelry  
Seems driven from the silent town;  
All settle down in quietness  
As if no mirth they had e'er known,  
The north wind comes with frost clad wings  
And chills the bloom upon the lea;  
Once more the dogs in quiet roam  
Through sweet St. Andrews by the sea. 🐾