

# A WELL-TRAVELED VISITOR

*Submitted by Village of Richfield Springs Historian Harriett Geywits*

Each year throughout the resort season of Richfield Springs, there were testimonials to the area published in the city newspapers. One such letter to the editor was carried in the 1887 issue of the BOSTON BEACON and republished in the RICHFIELD MERCURY. It was written by Mrs. M. J. Pittman who was staying at the New American.

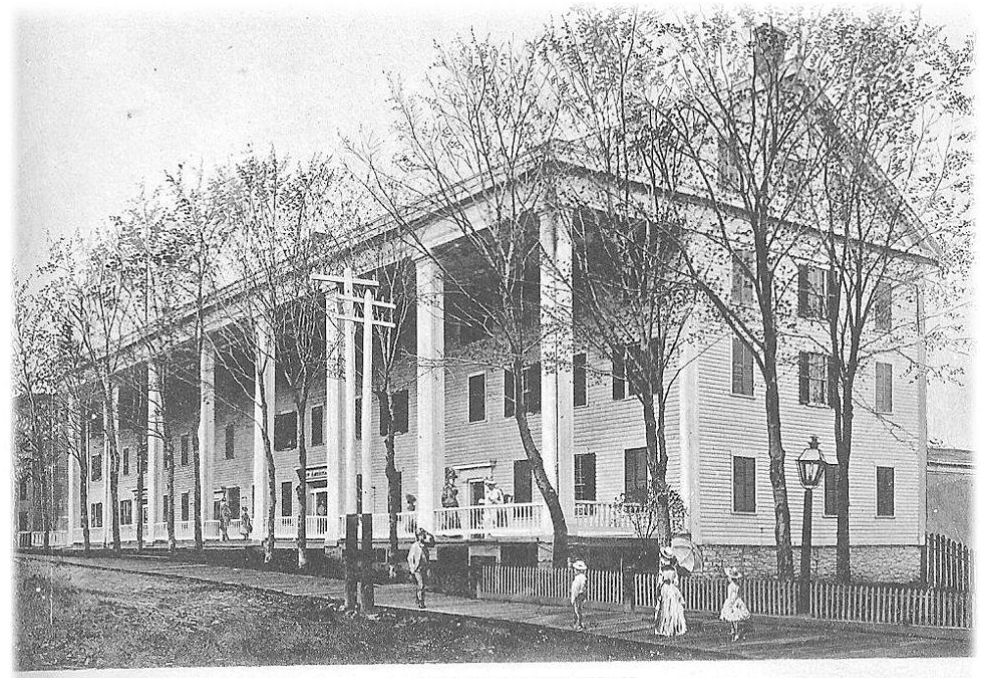
“As I sit down to write you of this place, some one makes the rather discouraging remark, ‘Bostonians have no interest in Richfield Springs. It is too far away.’ If this is true, I conclude it is high time that Bostonians did feel an interest in so attractive a resort and it will only take a few lines to prove that the distance from the Hub is not so very great. You get into a drawing room car at eight in the morning and you get out at Richfield at seven in the evening. Is that a terrible journey to Americans, of whom a Frenchman once said to me, ‘your people cross the sea with no more thought than my people cross a river?’

Richfield nestles among lovely hills in the region of beautiful lakes, itself 1700 feet above the sea. It is a little village with great hotels, vis a vis and many smaller hotels and cottages. The cottages have bay windows and verandas and take boarders. I am told that you can get board all the way from eight to eighty dollars a week and that whatever is set before you at Richfield, as far as it goes, is good.

I can only speak of the New American which can accommodate four hundred guests - a great big, roomy, rambling house full of nooks and corners, with a piazza big enough to camp a regiment, and a parlor that gathers into it, hundreds on occasions. It looks into a pretty green park with rustic summer houses and settees and flowers and tennis courts. In this park is the sulphur spring which, I am told, smells worse than it tastes. I hope so, for the sake of those for whom this medicine is prescribed. Sulphur fumes sometimes cross the street and enter my window and I can’t but believe that an atmosphere so impregnated with brimstone as to turn my metal buttons green and my silver watch black and blue, must have the same effect upon the human system. To my certain knowledge, the rheumatic and neuralgic come as to the tomb of St. Genevieve and leave their crutches behind them. It does not have, however, the appearance of a health resort, as have certain baths in Europe, where invalids are painfully numerous.

Richfield seems to me to be a miniature Saratoga, with all that is offensive to the visitor who seeks a pleasant, quiet summer life, left out. So far, I’ve seen no ‘loud’ people at Richfield, though there are unmistakable evidences of great wealth and accustomed luxury. This is seen in the fine horses and handsome turnouts, rather than in personal adornment, though I am told the jewels and beautiful toilettes will appear in August. As in all such places, one is very independent in the matter of dress and certainly in this hotel, there is choice between the most restful quiet and the liveliest distraction.

It goes without saying that we fare well under the roof of Mr. Uriah Welch, once of the St. Nicholas in New York and now proprietor of the New American here.”



THE NEW AMERICAN.

In 1887, the New American opened on June 25th for the seventh season under the management of Mr. Welch. Renewed efforts for the pleasure, comfort and entertainment were always made to visitors accustomed to a luxurious cuisine, comfortable apartments and good service. It was noted in another article, that there had not been a death among the visitors and no case of typhoid fever, diphtheria or any other infectious disease present and that unruly and boisterous children were never seen. The little folks had ample playrooms and grounds allotted for their use so they could have happy times without disturbing other guests. Dr. Lewis Sayre, the eminent physician and surgeon of that time, in a letter to Mr. Welch, testifies to ‘the healthful and delightful atmosphere of Richfield as well as to the perfect condition of the New American in all its sanitary appointments.’

The large boarding stable connected with the New American had undergone extensive repairs in 1887 and was considered to be one of the best boarding stables in town, if not in the state. Howard P. Welch was proprietor and owner of some of the best horses in Richfield. Many of the best private families had engaged accommodations for their horses at this stable.

Who was the writer of letter? M. J. Pittman was born in Hartwick, New York on March 17, 1850 into a newspaper publishing family. She was educated by private tutors and in 1866 married Theophilus T. Pittman.

Using the pen-name of Margery Deane, she wrote children’s stories with sketches of her travels. She also served as a correspondent of the Boston Transcript and other journals and co-authored the Wonder World stories. Deane authored a travel book entitled European Breezes. Marie died in Paris in 1888.

She was a most welcomed visitor by the guests of the New American who, according to the MERCURY ‘were much gratified to learn that the charming lady Mrs. M. J. Pittman, better known as Margery Deane, would be among their guests.’