

## Sanitation

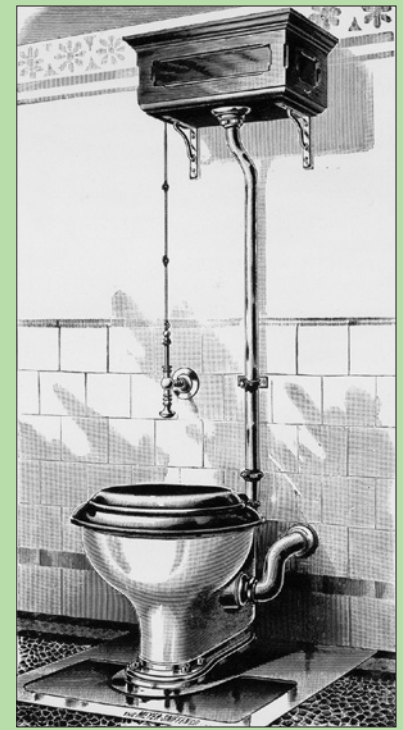
Descriptions of the original and the rebuilt Inn always mention the bathrooms, but not what happened to what went down the drains.

The volume of waste from an establishment like the Inn was a far cry from that produced in scattered settlements and farms. The hotel was reported to discharge 25,000 gallons of wastewater per day, most of it sewage. That had to go somewhere, and that was downhill to the west, into one of the small streams (probably Devon Run) that form the headwaters of Darby Creek. The only sort of treatment that the sewage underwent was passage through several “sumps” where solids were collected and removed at intervals. Those relatively small streams did not have the capacity to significantly dilute the resulting effluent, and it didn’t take long before property owners along the streams, led by C. Davis English, filed a complaint in 1889 with the State Board of Health and Vital Statistics about the “nuisance” created by the drainage from the Inn. The Committee on Water Supply, Drainage, Sewerage, Topography, and Mines investigated and found the complaint justified. The Inn hired an engineer, Gen. Russell Thayer, to design and install a system to prevent contamination of the stream. The new process was known as the Rimmer system and involved a two-stage solids separation process followed by filtration of the liquid through sand and gravel. It was inspected in June of 1890 and found wanting. The committee’s medical officer, W. B. Atkinson, reported in October, “I am forced to the conviction that there is a great discharge into the creek of water of doubtful character.” It was decided that the system should be given more time to reach optimum conditions, at which time more samples would be taken. That was done in 1891, and results of the chemical and microbiological testing demonstrated that the Inn was “dangerously polluting this water course.” By 1892 the board was clearly frustrated by the lack of progress. Dr. Atkinson visited Devon in April and found no improvement, perhaps even a deterioration of conditions. However, Mr. English, the chief complainant, seemed ready to withdraw his complaint since the sewer outlet had been moved to a point below his property! Although the board indicated that more action was needed, there is no mention of the Devon Inn in at least the next 10 years of annual reports.

In fairness to both the Inn and the Board of Health, there was little that could be done to remedy the situation given the technology of the times. Sewage treatment in those days was rudimentary at best. Even in 1905, greater than 95% of the urban population discharged untreated wastewater into waterways. Had the Inn been located near a larger water course where the discharge would have been diluted the issue might never have arisen. In fact, it appears that Coffin and Altemus tried to get to this solution by a massive project—probably impractical for a private entity—of laying a sewer line from the Inn to the Delaware Bay. Assuming that they would have entered the bay near the mouth of Darby Creek, the total length of the proposed line would have had to be more than 15 miles.

They had completed only seven miles when a land owner refused permission to cross his property. Sewerage companies did not have the right of eminent domain, and so this project ended.

By around the turn of the century, the Inn’s waste started to go into a larger system, but sewage disposal was to remain an issue. The full story of the Devon Sewage Company and its successor, the Devon Drainage Association is told in Herb Fry’s article in the July, 1999 issue of the *History Quarterly*.



(ABOVE) “The Brighton water-closet” – a flush toilet with elevated water tank, 1895. The Meyer-Sniffen Company, via Science History Images (BELOW) J.L. Mott advertisement, 1894, *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* Vol. 47, p. 19

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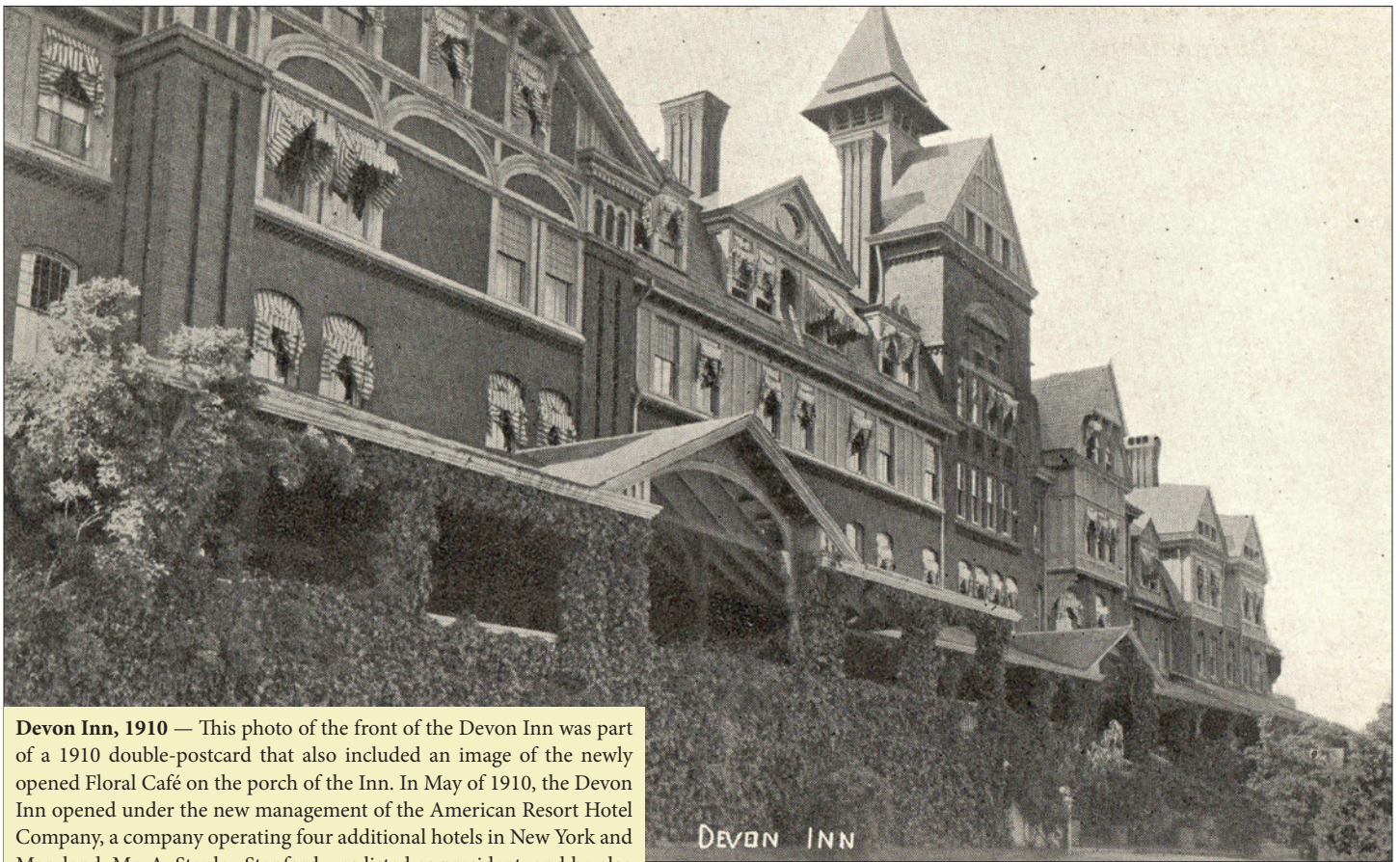
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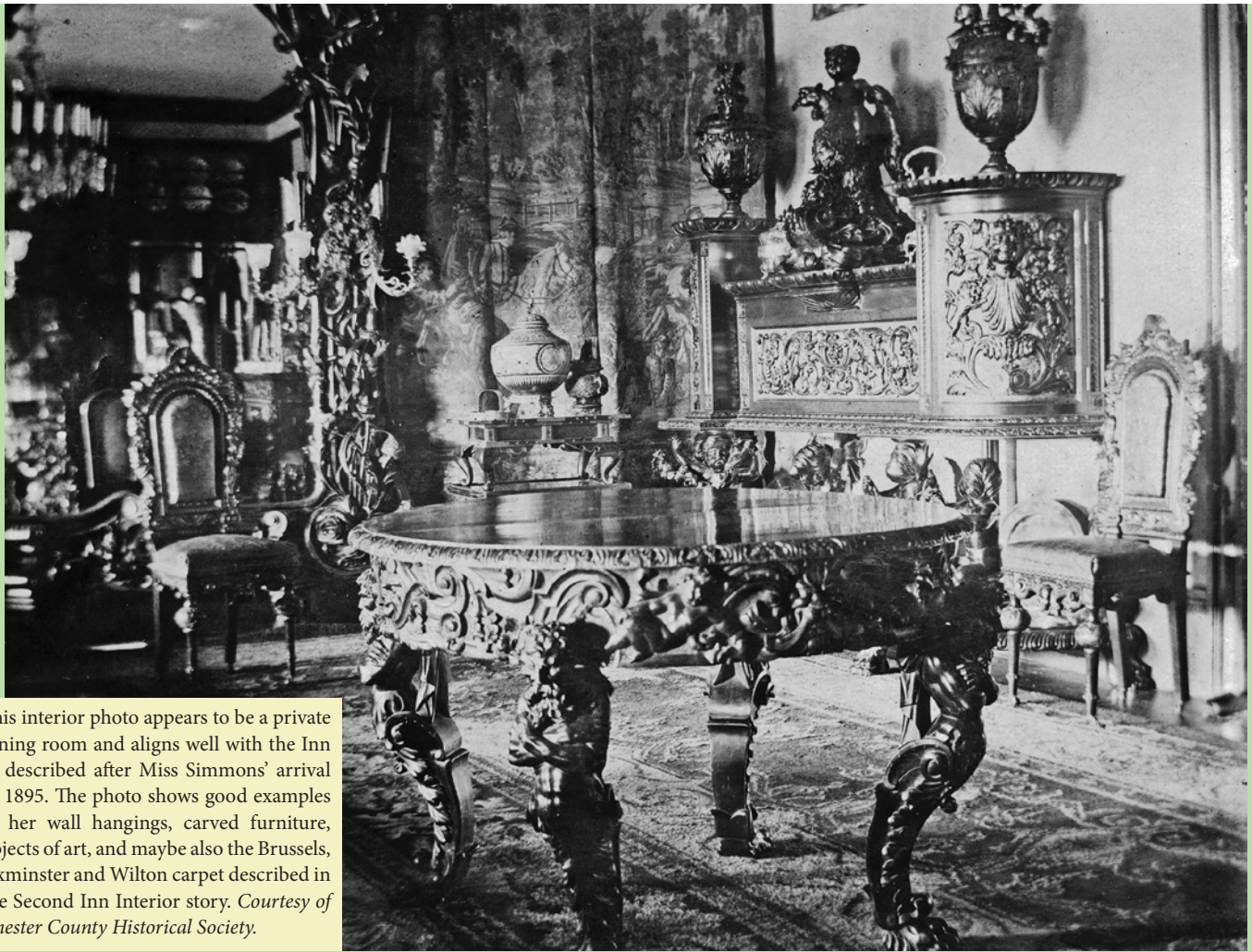
**Devon Inn, 1910** — This photo of the front of the Devon Inn was part of a 1910 double-postcard that also included an image of the newly opened Floral Café on the porch of the Inn. In May of 1910, the Devon Inn opened under the new management of the American Resort Hotel Company, a company operating four additional hotels in New York and Maryland. Mr. A. Stanley Stanford was listed as president, and he also became Resident Director of the Inn. Miss Mary E. Simmons had passed away the previous January necessitating the change in management. *Courtesy of TEHS Archives, Herb and Barbara Fry Collection.*

This photo shows what was perhaps the reception area and mail room that would have been on the main floor, and it appears to be a good representation of the oak paneling and oak furniture. *Photo courtesy of Barbara & Jack Jacobsen.*



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This interior photo appears to be a private dining room and aligns well with the Inn as described after Miss Simmons' arrival in 1895. The photo shows good examples of her wall hangings, carved furniture, objects of art, and maybe also the Brussels, Axminster and Wilton carpet described in the Second Inn Interior story. *Courtesy of Chester County Historical Society.*

## Second Inn Interior

In 1884, it was announced that the "house," as resort hotels were often called, would again be under the management of the Crumps. Construction of the new Devon Inn was said to have cost \$200,000, and this rendition was built of brick and stone.

Like other summer hotels outside Philadelphia, Devon was supposed to model the charming English inns of the past. In reality, it was built on a grander scale than any English inn and was said to look more like a handsome private manor than a hotel. It did, however, evoke Englishness. Local historian Julius F. Sachse described the exterior and setting of the hotel in his book, *Devon and its Historic Surroundings*: "The quaint gables and tower, the wide sweep of velvety lawn and wealth of shrubbery, the smooth drives and broad walk at once recall an English landscape with its proud baronial Hall. From the flag staff, however, float the Stars and Stripes in all their beauty, and in front of the building may be seen swinging in its yoke on the post, an old-time sign board bearing the name 'Devon Inn.'" (see page 2). The Sachse book is believed to have been the source of the "beautifully illustrated souvenir pamphlet" written for guests of the Inn, as described in the May 10, 1891 *Philadelphia Inquirer*.

The interior was designed on a large scale, giving a feel of comfort and elegance. The bedrooms were said to be twice the size of the average room in a first-class Philadelphia hotel. There were three bedroom floors and 155 rooms in total.

Twenty suites had private parlors, thirteen suites had private bathrooms, and twenty-two suites had private porches. There were no inside rooms or rooms looking out over a courtyard.

The first-floor furniture was all oak except for the ladies' parlors where it was upholstered in gold colored silk. The bedroom furniture was cherry and mahogany. The entrance hall had a carved oak ceiling, oak paneling and a large, open fireplace. A stained-glass window could be found beside the dining room door at the head of the staircase.

The Inn provided many rooms for music, reading, and conversation. Great paintings hung on the walls; the pianos, divans and tables were covered with elegant scarfs.

The carpets on the lower floor were manufactured by the Brussels, Axminster and Wilton company, and those on the staircases and upper floor were tapestry. J. Michael Morrison noted in his November 2017 presentation that Brussels, Axminster and Wilton was started in 1735 in England, and it still furnishes carpet today to many historic restorations such as Monticello and Belle Meade Plantation.

In 1895, when Miss M. E. Simmons took over management, she transformed the interior with her collection of wall hangings, carved furniture, and many objects of art collected while she was traveling abroad. What had been dark wood was now painted white, and the dining room was repainted yellow. Large apartments were created by combining rooms and adding arches and curtains.





## The Porches

One of the first things that caught your eye as you approached the Devon Inn was the wide wrap-around first and second-story porches, or piazzas as they were often called. Many of the families who spent the entire summer at the Inn even had a suite of rooms that would actually include private balconies.

The piazzas offered shade and a gentle breeze, making them perfect for summer socializing and viewing whatever was happening in the surrounding fields—cricket, baseball, military parades, steeplechase races, or even the Devon Horse Show. Just imagine the lower floor festively decorated, with an orchestra gently playing on the porch and light refreshments being served to guests and friends.

In the days before air conditioning, breezes were especially prized. To quote the June 2, 1889 *Times*, “If there is a breeze from any quarter, they get it at the Devon Inn.” The architecture of the Inn enhanced this natural advantage; the second Inn, like the first, was constructed with a high-ceilinged transverse hallway, open on both ends (facing north and south), that earned the name “the flume,” because it was said to provide a constant breeze.

(UPPER) This postcard (c. 1909) provides a clearer look at the steps leading up to “The Flume” or high hallway—open on both sides—that was said to provide a constant breeze. *Photo courtesy of Barbara & Jack Jacobsen.*

(MIDDLE) This postcard, dated 1907, shows the front of the Devon Inn. The steps on the left lead up to the main entrance, and a carriage may be seen at the bottom. The steps on the right provide access to “The Flume” or wide open central hallway. *Courtesy of Meg Wiedersheim*

(LOWER) This photo appears to have been taken standing on the landing of the steps leading up to “The Flume.” The photographer was looking north toward Devon Station. According to the 1900 *Atlas of Properties*, the house in the center was owned by Mrs. E.R. James. The long structure to the right, or east, was the Devon Inn Livery Stable. *Courtesy of the Chester County Historical Society.*