Digital Image, 2009. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library

Wayside Inn - hotel

There was never in America as great an expense of time, money and several kinds of brains in order to find the most agreeable, comfortable and if possible elegant and beautiful surroundings for daily living as there is now. Every possible effort is made to meet every demand, even the most fantastic, in furnishing living quarters. Architects travel the world over jotting down new outlines, unusual bits of arrangement and decoration for outside and inside. Decorators buy right and left and spend prodigious sums in imitating successful furnitures of the past - of the past of every country. As for convenience and comforts every new house that goes up, every new apartment has something ingenius to show. But, after all is done and said, the exertions of the present are not giving us as perfect a result as fitting for America as we get by combining with certain carefully worked out American houseplans made to fit the particular purpose and furnished according to early American ideas.

I never was so convinced of this as on a recent visit to The Wayside Inn which has been salvaged by Henry Ford. I one could wipe out the sight-seers I don't know that you could find anywhere a home that brings a deeper sense of content and fitness than in what is shown in this Inn.

The original now something like 230 years old with the additions that followed in the next hundred years preserved the fine proportions that early builders adopted from the English, so that going into the place with its broad halls and its

comfortable rooms on either end you have the satisfaction of length, breadth and height that go together. You have the furniture that belongs. Almost everything in the place from the wooden porringers on the kitchen table to the old lacquered clock in the best room may be called a museum piece either for its rareness, its quality or its history.

It would have been very easy for Mr Ford with his vast collection of Americana to have filled the house as full of pieces of various periods represented as many another collector is doing; but all of the restraint of the best early time is shown in having only the things that belong and that are necessary to the comfort of the family and its guests.

One has only towatch the sight seers that file by the hundreds through these rooms every day,- there were 3000 visitors on the Sunday before Labor Day of this year - to realize the impression that the house as a whole makes even upon those who understand very little of its real values and its real beauties. It has an amazingly quieting influence upon them as if here were a thing of such dignity, of such worth in itself that they are filled with a kind of awe or amazement. As for the knowing - those who realize the effect that devotion to quality and fitness has had instead of an effort to impress by quantity, such people get a joy out of The Wayside Inn which is something that museums cannot give. While all the values of the periods in which the house was growing to its best estate have been thoroughly considered there has been added to it those arrangements for comfort which its builders did not know.

Coming out of my bed room on the third floor my first morning in the Wayside, in a crisp September morning, I had the sudden feeling of how cold it must be in winter, how one would have to run through these halls to get to the fireplace, and how cold

Digital Image, 2009. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library

at night you would have been for a bed pan; but a second glance and I realized that just as I had gone to bed the night before - not by candle light but by electricity cunningly applied to genuine old bed-room sconces, so now the Wayside had been made as comfortable all winter as in summer by the application of a modern heating system. That is, while the fireplaces in the kitchen, tap room and best room blaze for your delight and to give the feel of that best old day, the real things which we have added have all been applied. Indeed, the Wayside Inn today might be used as model for the really best that America has ever done in housing. It has that supreme quality of simplicity. It gives you a sense of something fit and belonging to America. It has no trace of that hateful thing that we find in so many gorgeous American palaces - the effort to out-do, to accumultate, to show how much money you have, and to always change and vie. That is, in the Wayside Inn there is none of the mark of the salesman - it's the real thing.

Henry Ford does not claim to know what art means, but in his insistence that this place by kept as it is he has shown a supreme artistic sense.

It is as good outside as inside - trees and the garden, so spacious and beautiful and yet so natural and simple.

This is something of what one feels who lingers about the place, for it is worth while lingering in as you must to see the place and feel its quality;and itt worth while lingering to see the crowds that pass through it.

One of the happiest things about it is the choice that has been made of the hostesses who take visitors about - a half dozen who are all charming, cultivated, simple New England ladies. They belong, and if by chance they come from the Middle West, as some of them, I believe, have done, the surroundings in which

Digital Image, 2009. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library

they live have somehow given them a New England air and look. They suit the place and they love it and love every article in it. That you know as you join again and again the little crowds to which this or that is being explained.

Of course it would be too much to expect that all of the auditors would appreciate what these women so love and so kindly explain. The young largely get nothing of the charm, I take it. They are to used to stuffed furniture and radios and Spanish and French interiors and exteriors. It is not for them. It is for the middle aged and the occasional old, that carry on something of the kind of breeding and tradition for which this house stands.

Now and then there is one so moved by it that you find tears in their eyes. Somehow it goes to my heart, a woman said to me. This was what my fathers had and oh if we could have but preserved it.

Again and again, too, these travelers pass on bits of information, so the hostesses tell me. In the old New England kitchen - a masterpiece in its way, one day a hostess spoke of the article which we know as a 'spider'. "You are wrong, lady," a gentleman spoke up promptly, "a spider had short legs. That is how it got its name." And of course he was right," said my hostess, jubilantly, but I had never known it, and so we are constantly getting little bits of information in thatway."

Digital Image, 2009. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library

Wayside Sun

What is the best thing we have done
here in our in the way of living
~~[illegible]~~ - that which is our own - not
imitation of other lands - not the popular
forms of today - ephemeral - the palace
the apartment -

Wayside Sun - thanks to H. D.
Most beautiful, dignified - Amena -
fitted to, sky & landscape & hadden
set - simplicity fitting -

Hc

Digital Image 2009 - The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1820-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library