

THE RUGGED AND RUSTIC LIFE



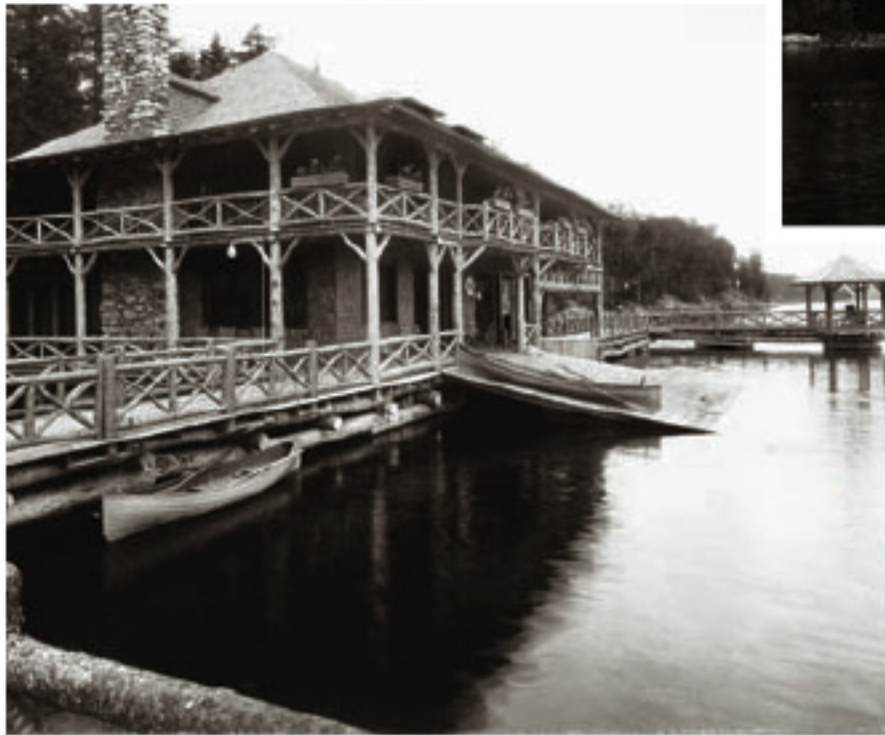
Grandly situated on a hill
above the lake, the main lodge
at Prospect Point was
designed by William Coulter.

*Nestled among the
Adirondack Mountains
is the retreat
that became the wild
playground of the
Gilded Age.
Now, author Gladys
Montgomery illustrates
the destination in
her new book
An Elegant Wilderness.*

BY GRACE WHITNEY

IN HIGH RUSTIC LODGES with dozens of bedrooms, two story fireplaces, icehouses and boathouses, along shimmering lake-shores, the aristocracy of the Gilded Age found a haven in the Adirondacks. Before Paris was coined a "moveable feast" and Las Vegas became "America's Playground," the Adirondack Mountains of upstate New York punctuated the ideal of the classic summer getaway, a haven of nature and wealth where the industrial rich spent their summers away.

In her new book *An Elegant Wilderness: Great Camps and Grand Lodges of the Adirondacks, 1855-1935* (Acanthus), author Gladys Montgomery has revived the forgotten life



This page, clockwise from top left: the dining room in Nahasane's Forest Lodge, 1902; a roofed passage links to the lodge at Bull Point; Lower Ausable Lake, Seneca Ray Stoddard, 1889; the boathouse at Camp Inman, had a casino and four guest bedrooms; ladies hike while their guides carry spruce woven pack baskets; the boat landing at Knalwood. Opposite, clockwise from top left: Pauline Brandrath with guide at Camp Comfort (later Trophy Lodge); roofed walkway at Prospect Point; the boat landing at Topridge.





This page, clockwise from top left: at Camp Inman, taxidermy was displayed with a sense of kitsch, but the art of displaying of hunting trophies was a hallmark Adirondack tradition; walkway and buildings rimmed Upper Saranac Lake at Eagle Island, the Adirondack residence of New York governor Levi Morton; a view of Kamp Kill Kare bathhouse, circa 1920, during the Garvans' ownership. Opposite: guests on a canoe at the Sagamore; inset, the book cover.



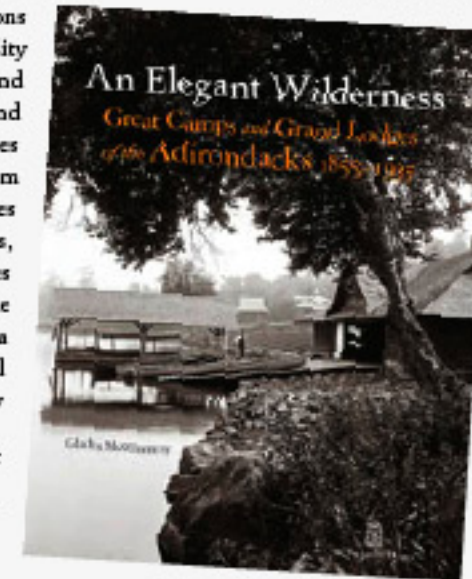
of luxury and leisure in the Adirondacks. With archival photographs never before published, the mountains are illuminated as the luxury retreat they were—and still are.

As the economy boomed in 19th-century America, newly made tycoons and magnates from New York City sought their summer vacations, and in the idyllic Adirondacks they found them. They arrived to their rustic lodges in private Pullman cars, with chefs from the city's premier restaurants, retinues of servants, tennis and singing coaches, chauffeurs and secretaries, and cadres of famous guests. Unlike other upscale resorts, the Adirondacks offered a reprieve from the constricting social customs felt by so many of the wealthy urbanites.

The great camps and lodges of the Adirondacks accommodated the likes of Daniel Guggenheim, Lucy Carnegie, Margaret Emerson Vanderbilt, financiers J. P. Morgan and Otto Kahn, philosopher William James, railroad owner Collis P. Huntington, and New York governor Levi Morton.

Enthralled with the idea of "roughing it," they went fishing,

hunting, hiking, and played tennis. "While the wealthy reveled in the Adirondacks' scenic wilderness and its recreational pastimes, they weren't really 'roughing it,'" writes Montgomery. "For the most part, theirs was an elegant wilderness."



In her 1923 book on etiquette, Emily Post devoted an entire chapter to an Adirondack house party: "Roughing it" in the fashionable world," she wrote, "is rather suggestive of the dairymaid playing of Marie Antoinette; the 'rough' part being mostly 'picturesque effect' with little taste for actual discomfort."

Among the hills and mountains, buried deep in the forests, they found an aesthetic of wilderness and rusticity that came to define the romantic American image of the great outdoors.

"Rusticity—to a large degree—was defined and redefined in the Adirondacks," writes Caroline M. Welsh in her foreword for *An Elegant Wilderness*. Welsh, an art historian and director of the Adirondack Museum, explains that "the

American expression of rustic had, at its core, notions of wilderness as untamed and uninhabited nature, a concept of wilderness that was really an imaginative creation." ♦

