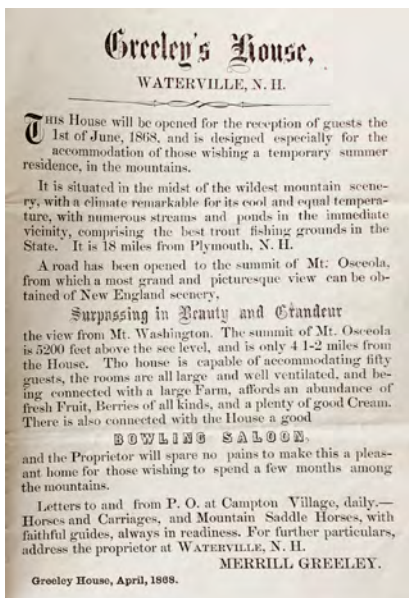




**PROMOTING WATERVILLE VALLEY — THEN AND NOW**

Waterville in 1889 was not a ski destination, but word was getting around that it was a great place to escape the summer city heat. In those days, you learned about places like this from talking to people or reading hotel brochures, like the one produced by the proprietor of the Greeley House.



Sometimes personal letters could turn into advertisements or be published in newspapers. One such source of publicity for summer in the valley in the early days was the Boston newsletter *The Congregationalist*, with a circulation even larger than the *WigWag* [EDITOR'S NOTE: but certainly not as distinguished a subscriber base] and some very earnest contributors who knew something about how to promote a tourist destination.

Without photographs or many visuals to accompany these testimonials, writers relied on rhetoric. The June 1889 edition of *The Congregationalist* featured a lengthy description by H. A. Bridgeman of a tantalizing, elusive place he calls “the Happy Valley”.

Of course there is only one place in all the White Mountain region which corresponds with the roseate picture which has been drawn. Everybody who has ever been there will think of Waterville, and everybody who has not been there will have hard work to find it, either on the map or in the postal guide. ... The lovers of the Happy Valley are unanimous in their wish that the iron horse will never come any nearer to it than Campton Village, ... that the electric light, the telephone, the put-a-nickel-in-the-slot machine and all the other modern inconveniences will never invade its privacy ...

Waterville is a place that is appealing for its beauty and its remoteness, and even for its difficulty of access. Bridgeman writes of the sad moment when he had to leave Greeley's guest

house. But it is a moment that is made less painful by the prospect of a very long route home, first through the mountains by carriage to Littleton and then by slow rail back to the city:

A pair of stout horses and a mountain wagon are at the door. ... and you are off in the glory of a perfect morning, with a forty mile carriage ride in prospect. ... You wind up by the side of the Pemigewasset river through North Woodstock, past the Flume, wilder than ever since the storm ... past the Franconia levels... a good supper and a promenade on the piazza which commands one of the most extensive and satisfying views in the White Mountains and at ten o'clock you are off again in a light buggy for Littleton. The heavens never were so thickly studded with golden points. The soft night air is like tonic. The hour goes by before you have recounted to yourself one-half of your good time. By midnight you are resting in a “Monarch” sleeper, and when day breaks you are nearing that terminus of all respectable railroad systems – Boston.



Today's advertising of the valley might stress the 'get away from it all' element, but not the inconvenience. Slow travel and detailed study of places to discover en route no longer seem to hold much appeal. Current promotional material always emphasizes speed of access. And it is not wordy. The only map you need to use is one that tells you the short time it takes to get here, and the only description needed is a snowfall report. The long, flowery accounts of the sort written by Mr. Bridgeman and his friends would never make it past the editor's desk.



Promotion in the 2020s.