

historic hotels



The
Greenbrier®



Situated on 6,500 acres in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, The Greenbrier's three championship golf courses, indoor and outdoor tennis courts, clinic, and sumptuous spa, in combination with its unique heritage, make it one of the most exceptional and best loved resorts in the world. A National Historic Landmark representing over 225 years of history, its classically designed main hotel surrounded by 97 guest and estate houses have housed a glittering Who's Who from the political, social, and entertainment worlds through the nineteenth century to the present day. As resident historian Dr. Robert S. Conte recounts in his meticulous *History of The Greenbrier*, the resort also played stirring roles in the American Civil War and World War II, and, like the grand French estates to which it has often been likened, has

At the outbreak of the Civil War the resort became a Confederate headquarters, and when West Virginia seceded from Virginia in 1863, it was taken over by Union soldiers. Tensions between Northern and Southern visitors during Reconstruction were eased by the gallant General Robert E. Lee, a summer resident, determined to express no antipathy toward his former Union foes once the war had ended. Made more accessible by the new railroads, the resort quickly regained its status as the Valhalla of American Society. Now travelers coming from Washington D.C. could reach the resort in fifteen hours instead of four or five days.

Purchased by the C&O Railway in 1910, Frederick Junius Sterner was commissioned to design a new hotel. Named The Greenbrier (and the center section of today's hotel), it arrived just in time to capture the



served as a conference venue for successive U.S. Governments and a place where U.S. Presidents have come to work and relax.

In 1778 Mrs. Amanda Anderson was carried through the Allegheny Mountains to bathe in the mineral waters at White Sulphur Springs and afterward declared her rheumatism cured. When James Calwell announced his new resort by building the first springhouse in 1815, health-seeking vacationers had already been pitching their tents in the area for some time. "If I can't go to the White as I am accustomed to, well then, by George, I'll just stay home and die," Richmond judge James Lyons declared, expressing the sentiments of the Southern well-to-do who took to spending every summer there, "taking the waters" and meeting their social peers. To ensure accommodation, many paid to have their own private cottages built; giving rise to the rows of cottages that formed the resort's primary accommodation until 1858 when the first hotel was built to provide additional rooms.

clientele prevented by the Great War from making their annual visits to Baden-Baden and Marienbad in Europe. An 18-hole golf course completed in 1913 put The Greenbrier in the forefront of the craze sweeping the country. While President Woodrow Wilson was among the first golfers to play on the course, social columnists gathered en masse to record the doings of Pulitzers, Guggenheims, Bloomingdales, Gimbels, and Auchincloss's who came to play. The Greenbrier's reputation as a golf Mecca was incalculably enhanced by the presence of the legendary Sam Snead, the resort's pro for almost fifty years until his death in 2002.

The revelry ended in December 1941 when the U.S. State Department requested the use of the hotel to house enemy diplomats until their departure from the country could be arranged. The hotel was transformed into a hospital for the remainder of the war, nicknamed "The Shangri-La For Wounded Soldiers."

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In 1946 interior designer Dorothy Draper rose to the challenge of restoring The Greenbrier to its former glory.¹ Following her dictate that “color is magic,” she introduced brilliant colors everywhere, even to the red bathroom towels that inventive guests took to wearing as sashes and shawls and headwear. The Duke and Duchess of Windsor, Bing Crosby, and William Randolph Hearst were among the guests who dined on beluga caviar and pink champagne at the opening party in 1948. One high-society chronicler described it as “the outstanding resort Society function in modern history.”

Since President Martin Van Buren’s visit in 1838, The Greenbrier has played a key role in the political life of the country. The North American Summit Conference, the most important postwar government conference, was hosted there in 1956 by President Eisenhower. In 1992, it was revealed that during the Cold War a secret underground facility had been built at the resort to house Congress in the event of an attack.

“It was everyone’s fantasy Georgian antebellum mansion...from which women emerge as Scarlett O’Hara and men stride through the library as Rhett Butler. This was the realization of that dream of the Old South,” was how interior designer Carleton Varney who took over from Dorothy Draper after she retired, described his first impression of The Greenbrier. The 2001 expansion of the mineral bath and spa is yet another reconnection with the past and with the enterprising Mrs. Anderson who first discovered the miracle of White Sulphur Springs. @

¹ The exhibition *The High Style of Dorothy Draper*, which opens May 2 and runs through August 27, 2006 at the Museum of the City of New York, includes furnishings and photographs loaned from The Greenbrier. Visit www.mcny.org for more information.

The Greenbrier is located at 300 W. Main Street, White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia. For information and reservations call 1.800.624-6070 or visit www.greenbrier.com.

