

ESCAPE

TUCKED AWAY

A historic Pennsylvania inn revitalizes a Gilded Age resort town

IF YOU'RE LOOKING for a haute hideaway, program your GPS, drive straight into the über-romantic, 19th-century American landscape painting of the Delaware Water Gap—with its misty, tumbling cascades and craggy cliffs—and make a sharp right just after crossing the New Jersey state line into northeastern Pennsylvania. You won't be in the look-alike Hudson River Valley, but rather in the oft-painted, though less publicized, Delaware River Highlands. There you'll find the comfortably lived-in resort town of Milford (population 1,100) and, boldly set on one of Broad Street's more picturesque corners, the three-story Italianate Hotel Fauchère, proud in pristine white with black shutters.



Clearly, an 1852 hotel with a grave accent in a hidden corner of Pennsylvania has a story to tell. And indeed the mystique of this 16-room boutique inn—reopened in 2006 by current owner and impresario Sean Strub—derives from its history. While Milford, with its surround of trout streams, biking trails, and “paths of desire” (unmarked hiking paths), has been attracting multiplying numbers of Manhattan types, the influx is nothing compared to the Gilded Age, when Louis Fauchère, master chef at New York City's fabled Delmonico's restaurant, opened his summer hotel. The “crazy Frenchman,” as he was known around town, created buzz, amplified by the region's many nature painters, and, soon, silent-film directors. Hotel guest D.W. Griffith shot two films nearby. A century of bold-face names followed: Babe Ruth, Sarah Bernhardt, Stephen Crane, Mae West, Robert Frost, and three presidents (two Roosevelts and a Kennedy).

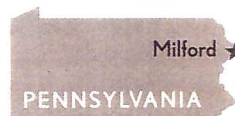
Rediscovering the spot after its doors were shut for decades, Strub clocked the good bones: “The marble entryway, chestnut floors, and mahogany banisters were still intact. I knew in a minute I was going to restore it.” Eminently entrepreneurial, Strub set to work retooling without a specific date-stamp. In the spirit of André Balazs at Chateau Marmont—a favorite hotel of Strub's—he chose subtle touches rather than broad strokes. There's no art on the walls of the simply elegant beige guest rooms, with their bluestone bathrooms, though Hudson River School paintings line the hallways of the hotel. Strub

reinvented Fauchère's restaurant with a chef who eschews trendy fusions for perfectly roasted meats and fish. And the basement gets a little louche at Bar Louis, which features both delectable sushi pizza and a Christopher Makos photograph of Andy Warhol kissing John Lennon.

Build it and they will come. Like Louis Fauchère, and with no advertising, Strub now finds himself with his own 21st-century boldfaced-name clients, from across the political spectrum. Kennedys (filmmaker Rory, daughter of Robert) and Bushes (Lauren, niece of George W.) are fans. On election weekend Lauren Bush, with friend David Lauren (son of Ralph), was spotted in town wearing an Obama pin. Recently on the guest register: author John Berendt (*Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*) and a still-chic Gloria Steinem.

The inn's front porch, lined with rockers, opens onto a village still refreshingly indie, without a single Starbucks or Barnes & Noble, but with the Pâtisserie Fauchère next door, and the 20,000-plus-title Books & Prints on Broad Street. The local museum, the Columns, spookily enshrines “the blood-stained flag” on which Lincoln's head rested, post-shooting. Conservancy is very much the town theme—onetime resident Gifford Pinchot, whose stone chateau, Grey Towers, is open to visitors, plotted the U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service on a linen napkin with Teddy Roosevelt at the Fauchère. Guests spend as much time spying bald eagle nests, or canoeing, as reading in the inn's glassed-in conservatory.

Weekend getaway:
The 16-room Hotel Fauchère epitomizes the reemergence of the bucolic resort town of Milford, Pa.



Seated one evening in a Bar Louis banquette, eating red velvet cake, Strub suggests a visit to the nearby “fluviarchy.” My ears perk up at the strange word, which, like the hotel itself, Strub recycled—in this case from an 1820s Milford newspaper. “Fluviarchy,” it turns out, is a cascading tier of waterfalls, and when I discover Raymondskill Falls, a few miles away, I truly get the big picture—before me three falls drop 105 feet in a steep ravine, not a soul around, the highly oxidized atmosphere charged and electric. —BRAD GOOCH

