

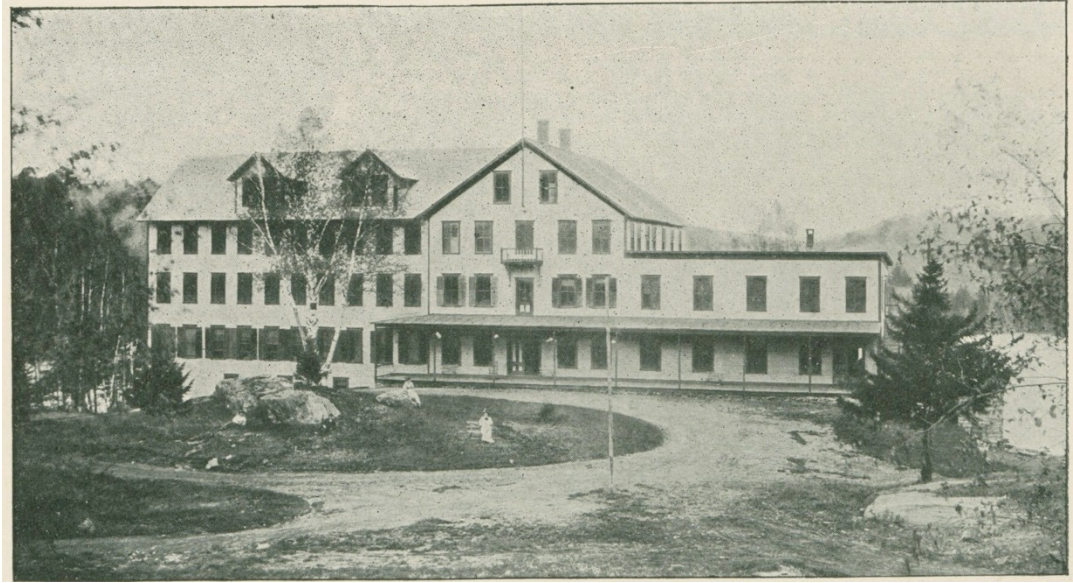


Photo courtesy of Meg Streeter

Hotel Raponda 1889-1896

Moses Newton (grandfather of Alice Newton Smith), was one of four brothers who owned paper mills in Holyoke, Massachusetts, and bought timber rights in the Deerfield River valley to provide wood pulp for their mills. To transport the pulp, in 1884 they built a narrow gauge railroad, the legendary Hoosac Tunnel and Wilmington Railroad, known as the “Hoot, Toot, and Whistle” and also the “Halt There and Wait.” In addition to their businesses in Holyoke, the brothers operated chair factories in Readsboro and owned the Wilmington Grain and Lumber Co. on the site of today’s Red Mill Inn.

Moses Newton and his brother John were also involved in efforts to make Lake Raponda both a resort destination and one of the area’s first real estate developments. Along with Hosea Mann, Elmer Wheeler, C. D. Spencer, and others, they formed the Raponda and Sylvan Lake Association and built a 50-room hotel that opened in 1889, the year of the railroad’s extension from Readsboro to Wilmington. Rudyard Kipling and Theodore Roosevelt were among the guests during its first season.



Hotel Raponda after the addition of the south wing

The hotel's partners were optimistic and secured a mortgage from Elmer Wheeler and C. D. Spencer to expand the hotel. When business failed to keep up with mortgage payments, Wheeler and Spencer assumed ownership of the hotel and some 160 acres of land around the lake following the nationwide "Panic of 1893" when unemployment reached as high as 18%. In 1896, the hotel burned with insufficient insurance to cover everyone's losses. The expected real estate boom also fell short of expectations; it took Wheeler more than fifteen years to sell all the lakeside property.

President, HOSEA MANN, JR. Vice-President, MOSES NEWTON. Secretary and Treasurer, C. D. SPENCER.

Raponda Lake Summer Resort,
Hotel and Picnic Grounds.

DIRECTORS.
 MOSES NEWTON.
 E. E. WHEELER.
 HOSEA MANN, JR.
 J. H. STOWE.
 C. D. SPENCER.
 JOHN C. NEWTON.
 JOSEPH GILBERT, JR.

G. R. WHIPPLE, Manager.

Wilmington, Vt., Aug 20 1891



Lakeside view of the expanded Hotel Raponda circa 1895



Hillside view of the expanded Hotel Raponda circa 1895

*Sources: Wilmington Historical Association and the Alice Newton Collection
Researched and written by Will Melton*