

The Homestead Is A World Apart

By Alice Scott and Danny Scott



Hail to the chiefs, starting with the Algonquins then George Washington who awarded Capt. Bullitt 300 acres in Hot Springs, Va., after the French and Indian War. The Homestead opened on this land in 1776, and has hosted 23 presidents since. At 10 a.m. in the lobby, join the magical history tour for lots of trivia and stories. Beforehand, you might meet staff member Wilson in the Main Dining Room, warmly welcoming guests to the heartiest of breakfast buffets for only 60 years. He says he doesn't usually tell people that, but they might notice him on the "55-plus" wall, commemorat-

ing employees who have served for that amount of time. Service throughout the Homestead is tried and true, deploying southern hospitality by 1,000 employees, 80 of whom have worked there for over 30 years.

Stately, nostalgic, historic and charming are just a few words to describe two of the most iconic golf courses in America. These picturesque Homestead courses snuggle against the Allegheny Mountains. The Old Course, a favorite of many past presidents, is a journey of elevated fairways and evergreen valleys. Clouds and fog hug the mountain range with illuminating sunshine

between that highlights the resort's magnificent architecture and style. From many points on the course the massive tower of the Homestead is seen jutting into the Virginia sky, signaling this is the place to be. 'Expansive' is not an adequate word to describe the lodge, grounds, and resort offerings. Even the woodchucks on course are longer than normal.

The Cascades is rated the No. 1 course in Virginia. A stone monument at the start highlights Sam Snead's saying, "If you can play the Cascades, you can play anywhere." The difficulty lies in blind tee shots over severely sloping fairways



The Old Course Hole 9



The Old Course Hole 2



The Old Course Hole 17



Indoor Pool



Jefferson's Patio



The Great Hall

leading to fast greens along babbling brooks and mountain streams. Lower level cascades naturally fall throughout, if the area is not suffering through a drought. If waterfalls meet your fancy, sign up for the optional three-hour tour of Cascades Gorges in the afternoon, but don't try to go on your own as it is guarded private property and trespassers will be fined. However, the concierge can direct you to a public viewing spot of the 84-foot waterfalls.

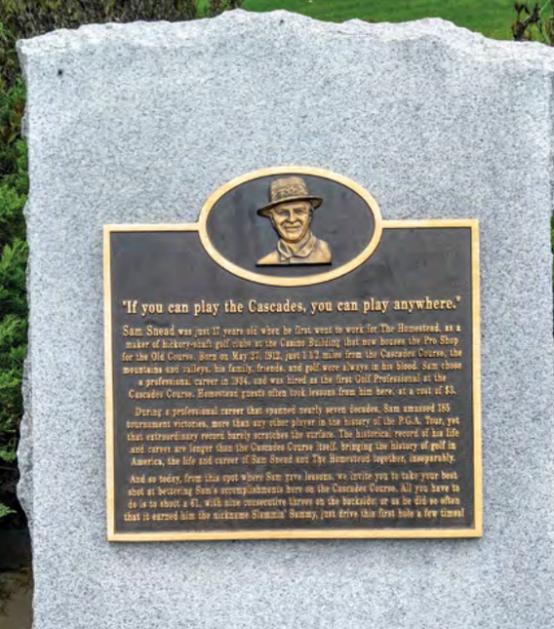
The Allegheny Springs at the Omni Homestead delivers a water fix for the whole family, complete with swimming pool, whirlpool, lazy

river, water slides, and even a sandy beach and food service. In winter it converts to a skating party. In separate buildings for men and women, the Jefferson Pools provide soaking opportunities in the naturally heated hot springs water.

Adults might make a day of the Spa Garden, where registered guests and members are admitted on a daily limited basis to enjoy this outdoor healing hot springs pool, the cold shoulder plunge shower or the River Reflexology Walk. Tiny stones are patterned to soothe the 15 thousand nerves in your feet. Who knew there were that many? Sign up at the

spa desk for this separately priced or packaged amenity.

Enter the Aqua Thermal Spa inside to alternate between hot and cool therapies. Relax in radiant-heated loungers in front of a scenic waterfall on screen or in the Herbal Cocoon room's heated niche below a starlit ceiling, or in the Aromatic Steam room with essential oils and colored lights. Cooling after exposure to heat happens in The Chill, a cold cabin where you inhale the crisp vapor and apply flaked ice directly to your skin, or at the Experiential Showers, which mimic by choice an Arctic Mist, Atlantic, or Caribbean Storm. Relax,





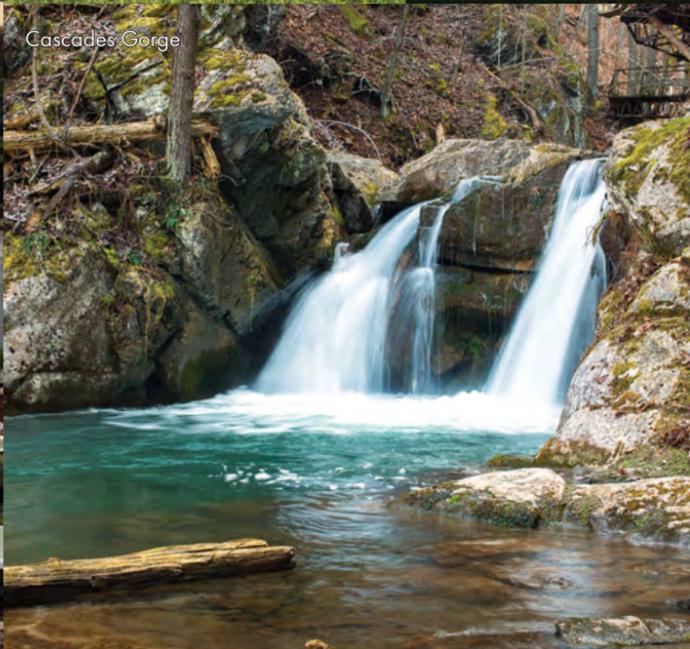
The Cascades Hole 15



The Cascades Hole 16



Allegheny Springs Slides



Cascades Gorge



Allegheny Springs Pool



rinse and repeat at the Aqua Thermal Spa, which is complimentary with paid therapeutic services that are plentiful to choose from and all very satisfying from facials to full massages. However you spa, make it a whole day and you will say, "Ah," at the Omni.

In the old days, Virginia taverns were abuzz about politics. Today, the Sam Snead Tavern still serves as that venue on the town corner, a short walk from the resort. The resort fire pit is another spot where debates might begin. Fireside s'mores kits are as calming as the flames and last more than a night. This is where you meet other guests like John, a retired

doctor from Knoxville, and his wife Beverly, mother of three. Strangers compare notes on places they've been and what to do here, like hitching a hayride up to the ski slope for more s'mores there.

Exquisite cuisine is served on the patio high above the pit or inside at Jefferson's Restaurant. Begin toasting with a White Water Hound or Virginia Manhattan. Local rack of lamb and spicy shrimp grits are prime entrees. In the evening, the main dining room requires jackets, a salute to the elegant days of yore.

For shoppers, on property the Sparrow's Nest sells artisan gifts, jewel-

ry, pottery, paintings, and homespun fabric art. Leading to the main dining room, the grand shopping hall has something for all within the resort.

Hike, bike or hop on a horse at the equestrian center. Play a board game in a cozy corner inside, golf, or ski but no matter what you do, enjoy the wooded scenery, fresh air, and hot springs – the town's namesake – as well as the well being, well healing reason for early settlers to visit. Today, the nostalgia might have you thinking in terms of thee and thou. You can't believe it 'till thine eyes hath seen it. Check for seasonal activity hours at www.theomnihomestead.com.

