

A Tale of



What would it be like to experience the tropical Colony, the sister hotel in Delray Beach, Florida?

BY COLIN W. SARGENT

“My father bought this hotel with his father in 1935,” says Jestina Boughton of her landmark Colony Hotel & Cabana Club, a Mediterranean Revival palace built on the corner of stylish East Atlantic Avenue and U.S. Route One in Delray in 1926.

“He and my mother were newlyweds. After their wedding in Atlantic City, they drove down the Post Road to Key West and caught the ferry to Havana for their honeymoon. But there was shooting in the streets” in the tumult from Batista’s rise to power, so they headed back.

“Dad had noticed this hotel, but it wasn’t open.” On the return trip, they stopped again and just stared at it. Three stories high, capped by a pair of fanciful domes and dressed in red roof tiles, The Alterap, as it was first known, was a masterpiece in stucco with distinct European flair.

Designed by Addison Mizner associate Martin Luther Hampton, the creator of nu-



2 Colonies

We know and love The Colony in Kennebunkport.
But have you met her uptown little sister in Delray Beach, Florida?





Double Vision

Jestena Boughton owns both the Colony in Kennebunkport and the Colony Hotel & Cabana Club in Delray. Her cousin John Martin is the general manager in Kennebunkport.

"One of his passions is food and beverage, as well as special events like weddings," Jestena says. Another improvement is the lush putting green that hangs over the Atlantic Ocean as few others can. Recently, "he got hold of the company that does the landscaping for Cape Arundel Golf Course, where I'm a member. Now, it's been upgraded to an infinity putting green, where there's no sense of an edge when you view it from the dining room or gazebo."

As for whether there's a 'tell' that the two grand resorts are owned by the same family, Jestena says that, beyond the matching porcelain servers both hotels had for many years, beyond the Candace Lovely watercolors that sparkle in both locations, "The image of a galleon, which appears here on our lobby fireplace and as a medallion on our exterior, also appears as the gold weathervane on top of the Colony's cupola in Kennebunkport." She spreads her arms to full length. "Up close, it's as big as this couch!"

"Jestena and I call each other sisters, because we both have red hair," says impressionist artist and friend Candace

Lovely. "She herself owns about ten of my paintings, the originals, and then many of my prints are in the rooms." She adores both hotels, for their differences as well as their grace. "I was Jestena's artist in residence at the Kennebunkport Colony in 1998 to catch the incredible light, the joyful sparkle that's in paintings like *The Veranda*. In 1999, I stayed in Delray as a resident artist also. Both hotels are very grand. They both have lovely hospitality. These two hotels are perfect, with perfect architecture" so individuated they couldn't swap places. "Who wouldn't want the Colony Hotel in Delray with its incredible Mediterranean architecture by its famous architect? How perfect is the sweeping New England shingle style of the Colony in Kennebunkport against the Atlantic?" Both hotels are roughly "in the shape of the letter E," Jestena notes.

Lovely's *The Veranda* travels everywhere in the world today, because "the New York Graphic Society reprints it," from WalMart to a museum gift store near you. "When some guests see it [at the Colonies], they're quite moved" to discover it at its source.



merous National Historic Landmark properties (including this one), it was shuttered because its first owner had lost his shirt in the Depression. "My father, George Boughton, was just 22. He called his father," Atlantic City hotelier Charles Boughton, "and said, 'Why don't we buy this?'"

Eighty years later, the Boughtons still own it. Not only is the Colony on the National Register of Historic Places, it's the centerpiece of the downtown revitalization of Delray as this year-round resort finds itself awash in delicious restaurants, music venues, and trendy destination shopping. "Here we are, the only historic hotel still standing on Atlan-



As a child, Jestena ran the elevator at the Maine Colony. Trained as an environmental landscape artist, she has transformed both hotels to be market leaders.

tic Avenue,” Jestena says.

As you enter from the avenue, you cross a terrace with Cuban terrazzo tiles shaded by yellow and maroon awnings on wrought-iron spears that match the original Spanish-revival lighting. Tables and wicker chairs offer views of the graceful



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TRAVEL TIPS: Stone crab season runs from October 15 to May 15. There is nothing like it. And don't miss that Cuban coffee. Breakfast is free, "but this is a downtown hotel, so we don't serve lunch and dinner when there are so many incredible restaurants all around **Atlantic Avenue** to try. Two examples: **Scuola Vecchia Pizza e Vino**, directly across Atlantic Avenue from the veranda, is a "hip, Italian spot that I'm delighted to say serves the most authentic Margherita pizza this side of Napoli." This restaurant alone is worth the trip to Delray. Then there's the glass-topped **Buddha Skybar**, with Japanese fusion, bright-red chairs, and a bustling sense of the city, another knockout attraction just steps away. Come ready to shop. The Colony Delray itself hosts a number of street-level fashion stops.

theater of the street amid the comings and goings at this dreamy address.

The way The Colony engages with the street is a miracle of welcoming. You'll want to stay here forever, reading the *Miami Herald* and sipping Cuban coffee (espresso cooked with sugar) by day, or perhaps enjoying cognac after twilight as night cools the city. There's a tincture of sophistication here that flirts with time. One guest flips through *The Atlantic* while her friend races through a novel—Lawrence Durrell.

But then you'd miss the lobby. To the right as you enter is a period-perfect bar, a new addition that looks as though it were al-

ways here. "But it couldn't have been here," Jestena's cousin Hilary Roche, the managing director, says. "The hotel was built during Prohibition."

The Ficks Reed rattan lobby furniture from 1926 is extant and perfectly reconditioned, layers of white paint removed to reveal the original glow and texture of the bamboo. How could it be that the hotel still has the original baby grand piano in its music room, the original brass and wrought-iron elevator from 1926 (with palazzo shards of glass on the walls, the cat's meow), and the lovely, solemn 1920s oak furniture in its 70 rooms? How could the 1926 telephone switchboard and oak writing desks filled with color postcards of the Colony still be here, deftly complemented by incredible 2016 touches?

The answer is Jestena, a landscape architect by training. She earned her master's from the University of Pennsylvania before taking a job with "the city of Seattle for five years," according to a fine story in the *Delray Coastal Star* by Mary Thurwachter. "Later, she taught landscape architecture and urban

design at the University of Massachusetts."

Jestena has let slip that she's a modernist, but the Mediterranean allure of the hotel keeps pulling her in. "My dad died in 1986. When my mother died in 1994, I came here as general manager." But this city, a par-

"The season was from January 10 until April 10. They had to get home and do their taxes!"

adise between Fort Lauderdale and Palm Beach, hadn't taken off the way it has now. "I thought of it as Dull-Ray," she laughs. "The interior walls here were pale beige."

Now they pop in lime, persimmon, and turquoise, with fabrics decorators would give their eye-teeth for. How does she do it?

"That's my favorite part of the business,"

ROAD WARRIOR

she says. "Procurement," finding the unfindable. "Procurement is even on my email address." Not to mention understanding her guests with astonishing canniness.

Today, both the Delray and Kennebunkport Colonies are famous for their repeat visitors. "In 1994 in Delray, we didn't have that," Jestena says. "What we had was a handful of little old ladies. A few years later, the Photographic Workshop was built in Delray, so we were able to add middle-aged men who wanted to take a photography course. We used to have wall-to-wall carpeting upstairs, but I knew we had luscious, original Dade County pine floors under there. When the carpets left, the old ladies left." She waits a beat. "These floors are harder. I guess they felt if they fell, they'd fall on a nice white carpet."

The founding sense of the hotel was "for train travelers, who came here with their big trunks," she says. "The season was from January 10 until April 10. Do you know why? They had to get home and do their taxes by April 15. And they weren't going to miss Christmas and New Year's in New England!"

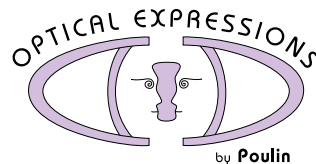
For fledgling travelers in the motor-ing set, there were, and still are, 18 double-door garages in one of the hotel wings where the cars could be parked, from Model-T to Pierce-Arrow, with the chauffeurs staying in rooms directly above. Think *Sabrina*.

While the Colony proper is five blocks from the beach to be in the center of all the action, a shuttle relays guests to the Cabana, Club, with its stunning, private sweep of Delray Beach and 80-degree turquoise water. "Dad bought the Cabana land in 1951," Jestena says. "We had a woodie" to shuttle guests to this oasis. There are umbrella tables, shaded beach lounge chairs, and above the dunes, a new edgeless pool designed by Jestena with opalescent glass tiles designed by Jestena that light up for incredible magic at night.

How often is it true that there's enchantment on both sides of a looking glass? The difference here is, The Colony in Kennebunkport (sample guest across the centuries, Gregory Peck) is a complete destination in itself, taking guests into its embrace and answering their every need. The more Bohemian Colony Delray (sample guest Leonard Nimoy) connects you to urban discoveries. Hey, just because they're sisters doesn't mean they have to be the same, does it? ■



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