

Robert Gendler, *The Andromeda Galaxy*, 2005 Inkjet print, 40 x 60 inches

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**Starstruck: The Fine Art of Astrophotography** exhibition catalogue.  
Authors: Jerry T. Bonnell, Dennis di Cicco, Weston Naef, Eric Wollman;  
edited by Anthony Shostak.

Published 2012, softcover, 242 pages

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*Funded in part by a grant from the Maine Arts Commission, an independent state agency supported by the National Endowment for the Arts.*

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# Ahead of the Curves

So much for lobsters and whoopie pies. Elizabeth Arden broke new ground when she made Maine the cradle of the *day spa*.

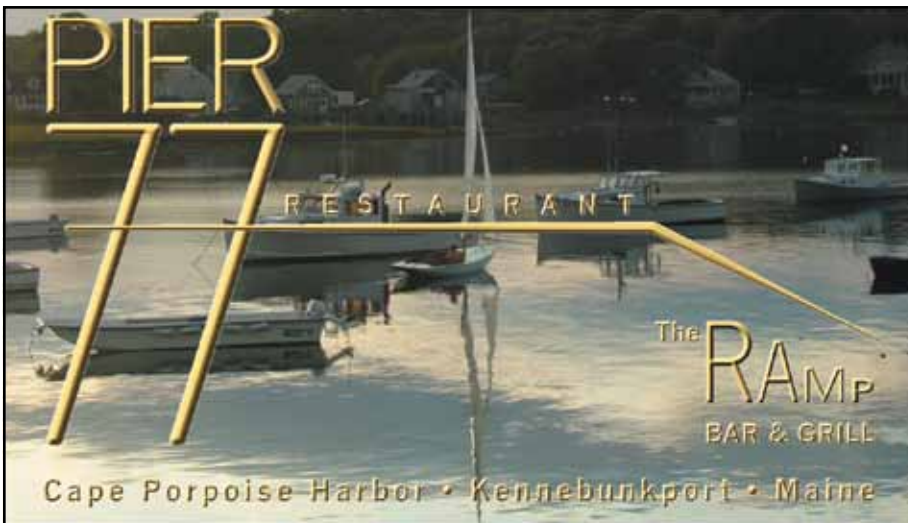


BY DAVID SVENSON

**I**n Mount Vernon, where Watson and Castle Island roads meet, Elizabeth Arden's **Maine Chance Health Spa**, est. 1934, was years ahead of the expansive spa market. While Manhattanites visited her Red Door salon on Fifth Avenue, calls for Judy Garland and Ava Gardner to begin their wax treatments echoed across the northern tip of Long Lake.

"I wasn't aware of that," Jenna Klassman, of Bold PR, says. "I'm not sure when that lo-





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## WHO KNEW?

# FROM THE UNSIGNED GUEST BOOK

*Rumor has it these celebrities drove in for Arden's Vacationland luxuries.*



*Ava Gardner*



*Judy Garland*



*Edna Ferber*



*Mamie Eisenhower*



*Eleanor Roosevelt*

cation closed. Since we've been with Red Door, we haven't seen a location in Maine."

Perhaps it's an issue of experience. Audrey Smith, an administrative clerk of 27 years for RSU 57 in Waterboro, worked at Arden's Maine Chance Health Spa for its last four years before closing in 1970.

Literary agent "Elisabeth Marbury was there first," Smith says. "She talked Arden into coming up from New York City."

Back in the 1930s, Arden's 32 acres of rolling hillside had facilities for "facials and a steam cabinet, tennis courts, a bowling alley

they used as an exercise room, and a wax room—I worked in there,” Smith says. “They covered you all over, except your head. It was incredible—\$1,000 for a week, and that was the regular treatment.”

**E**xquisite in services, Arden incorporated trend-driven practices as well, like “hula hoop classes” on lakefront decks, says Lakeside Cottage Rentals’s Stephanie Yeaton of Maine Chance cottage (still on the former grounds; channel Arden by renting it for \$200 a night, \$1,300 a week).

“My father was a gardener for Arden,” Smith says. “She was meticulous about her flowers and plants. It was phenomenal...extremely. Everything lined up. White, pink, and blue. Dad planted pansies in perfect lines.

**“They covered you all over, except your head. It was incredible—\$1,000 a week.”**

“He was also her chauffeur. When she flew out of Augusta, she was ready when she was ready. The plane would wait, and then she’d have my dad drive ‘on two wheels,’ all the way there. From the back seat, she’d say, ‘Go faster!’”

Miranda Priestly, anyone?

And talk about a cosmopolitan crew. “She brought in the staff from everywhere,” Smith says. “The masseuses were from Sweden. If she found someone she liked during her travels, she brought them back. Except for the grounds staff, no one was local. There was a Florida hairdresser who told Arden she’d done hair for the Kennedys. This impressed her, so she brought her to Maine.

“Everyone had to exercise and wear these god-awful, ugly, blue bathing suits with white robes during the day. But Edna Ferber [author of *Personality Plus*, *Dinner at Eight*, *Stage Door*, *Saratoga Trunk*, *Show Boat*, and *Giant*] was an exception. She typed. She’d come for a month and stay in her room. She’d go 24/7 like that,” while her friends got beautiful around her. ■

➤ For more, visit [portlandmonthly.com/portmag/2012/08/arden-extras](http://portlandmonthly.com/portmag/2012/08/arden-extras).



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