



TRAVEL + LEISURE

Top 50 Best Hotel in the World
Top 3 Inn & Small Hotel in USA

CONDÉ NAST TRAVELER

Top 100 Hotel in the World
Top 5 Hotel in USA

Reflecting the influence of both Second Empire and Colonial Revival architectural styles, The Willcox was established in the last years of the 19th century by Frederick Sugden Willcox. It assumed its present form in 1928 when the last of several additions was made to the hostelry.

Frederick Willcox came to America in 1891 from Cheshire, England, with his Swedish wife Elise. He made his way to Aiken to be a cater for the Old Highland Park Hotel, where he soon formed lasting friendships with social leaders from the East Coast, among them Mrs. [Thomas Hitchcock](#), who visited Aiken each winter. After fire destroyed the Highland Park Hotel in 1898, Willcox opened a small hotel of his own with encouragement from influential friends. The Willcox Inn welcomed its first guests in 1900.

An increasing demand for accommodations led Willcox to add to the inn in 1906, when an adjacent two-story house at Colleton Avenue and Newberry Street became part of the hotel. In 1928, further expansion was undertaken, including alterations in the west wing. The Willcox Inn was said to have had the first bathtub in the South connected with hidden plumbing. It was reported that at the height of the winter season the bellman would shake his head “no” as he escorted a would-be-guest to the registration desk. Owner Frederick Willcox knew that was his signal to tell the caller there was no room at the inn. One day Willcox asked the bellman, “How the devil do you know whether I should register a guest or not?” To which the employee replied, “His shoes, Mr. Willcox. If they don’t wear shoes by Peel or Maxwell of London, we don’t want’em.”

The far-reaching reputation of The Willcox was built on its atmosphere, impeccable service and excellent cuisine. It became “the hostelry” for national and international political, business, and social leaders and their families. Many guests returned year after year, and during the winter social seasons of the 1920s and 1930s, The Willcox was the setting for lavish entertainment. Famous guests included Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, Harold Vanderbilt, W.R. Grace, Gov. Averell Harriman of New York, Elizabeth Arden, and Count Folke Bernadotte of Sweden. During a crowded Masters Week, the hotel was regretfully forced to turn down a request for accommodations from the Duke of Windsor.

After the death of Frederick Willcox in 1924, his son Albert took over the proprietorship and operated the hotel successfully until his retirement in 1957. For the next twenty years the hotel was owned by Joseph Eways, an Oriental rug dealer, native to Palestine. Sporadic efforts to modify the building for other uses were initiated but never completed. In 1987 The Willcox underwent a multi-million dollar restoratoin and reoped as The Willcox Inn.

In November 2000, the property was purchased by The Garrett Hotel Group, based in Vermont, which owned and operated The Point - the prestigious, award-winning resort on Saranac Lake, and Lake Placid Lodge, both located in the Adirondack Mountains. Plans were immediately put in place to renovate the old "Grand Dame" and restore it to its former glory. Reopened in April 2002, after extensive renovations, the property was re-christened "The Willcox" to reflect its elevation of status and a return to the former commitment to excellence in service.

On New Year's Eve 2009, restaurateurs' Geoffrey & Shannon Ellis purchased The Willcox. Building upon the success of the previous owners, the Ellis' mission has been to bring back the spirit of 'the good old days' with a continued commitment to superb personal service, gracious accommodations and excellent cuisine. The Willcox has been voted one of the best hotels in the world by

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readers. The Willcox is the living room of the community and a second home to out-of-town guests.