

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Rock Rest

Name of Property

County and State

York County, ME

Section number SLR Page 1

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 07001449

Date Listed: 1-24-08

Property Name: Rock Rest

County: York

State: Maine

Multiple Name: N/A

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation, subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Patricia Andrews
Signature of Keeper

2/28/2008
Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination

Section 3, Level of Significance

Rock Rest has been listed in the National Register under Criterion A, for its association with the following areas of significance: Ethnic Heritage/Black, Entertainment/Recreation, and Social History. The nomination was submitted with the recommendation to list Rock Rest at the national level of significance, but the nomination does not substantiate national significance for any area of significance. It does not demonstrate the nationwide impact of events or persons associated with the property, the property's exceptional value in representing an important theme in the history of the nation, or the relationship between this property and other properties across the nation with similar associations (*How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, p. 10). Rock Rest, therefore, is listed in the National Register at the state level of significance.

Explanation

The National Historic Landmark program has published the theme study *Civil Rights in America: Racial Desegregation in Public Accommodations*, which is relevant to this nomination. A claim of national significance should be evaluated according to guidelines in

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relevant theme studies, because properties listed in the National Register may be considered for National Historic Landmark designation in the future. The Rock Rest nomination admits that the guesthouse does not fit the criteria for listing as outlined in this document—"it was not a site that overtly facilitated changes to the law, or was associated with people or events associated with desegregation activities on a national level" (see p. 8-6). Instead, the nomination considers it significant in the "less understood context of *de facto* segregation" (p. 8-6). If this is true, this type of segregation must be explained in a national context and Rock Rest must be evaluated according to other associated properties. If *de facto* segregation has not been evaluated from a scholarly perspective, associated properties cannot be evaluated for national significance at this time.

The nomination also justifies national significance due to the following three factors:

- Retention of period furnishings and historic documentation that concerns the operation of the guesthouse;
- The fact that guests came from 28 different states during the years 1948 and 1977; and
- The opportunity provided by the guesthouse "to holistically evaluate patterns of African American economy, travel and tourism in the post war years."

These factors are not evaluated in a national context and with examples from around the country. The text of the nomination identifies the summer communities at Fox Lake, Indiana, and at Idlewild in Michigan as similar establishments, and mentions several others in footnote 7 on page 8-6; however, it does not *compare* these properties with Rock Rest.

In 1950, only 1% of the Maine population was African American, and there are not many sites associated with African American history in the state. Therefore, the importance of Rock Rest at the state level is convincing. Only two other vacation establishments associated with Black tourists are known to have existed, the Cummings Guest House and the Jewell Inn in York Beach. The latter is not extant and the former is listed in the National Register at the local level of significance. In addition to its remarkable integrity, the nomination helps establish Rock Rest as a property of statewide significance by the following statements:

Rock Rest was a small-scale destination that offered black patrons from across the country the opportunity to comfortably and safely vacation in Maine (p. 8-6).

And even though Rock Rest capitalized on the mystique of Maine, (lobster dinners and clambakes), it was not a resort, a development, or a vacation community (p. 8-6).

These statements capture the Maine identity of the guesthouse and its unique place among Maine vacation destinations. The archival material that is not yet fully analyzed or inventoried may add

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to the statewide significance, but in its unprocessed form it contributes to the property only minimally. If the information was better understood, it might be considered important enough for Criterion D to apply.

Notification and Distribution

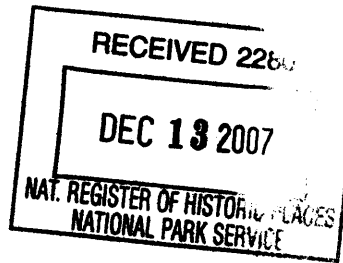
The Maine State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

This notice was distributed to the following:

National Register property file

Nominating Authority, without nomination attachment

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



1449

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Rock Rest
other names/site number Sinclair, Clayton and Hazel, House

2. Location

street & number 167 Brave Boat Harbor Road N/A not for publication
city or town Kittery N/A vicinity
state Maine code ME county York code 031 zip code 03905

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Kurt F. Mohney DSHPO 12/11/07
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Maine Historic Preservation Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): _____

Edson W. Beall 1-24-08
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
3		Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

None

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC / Hotel

DOMESTIC / Single Dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT / Not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH & Early 20th Century American Movements

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Asbestos

roof Asphalt

other Brick (Chimneys)

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ETHNIC HERITAGE / Black

ENTERTAINMENT / RECREATION

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

C. 1946 - 1957

Significant Dates

1946

C. 1948

C. 1954

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository:

Portsmouth Black History Trail; Portsmouth N. H.

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10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property 1.8 acres

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	19	36	36	17	47	73	67	77
	Zone	Easting		Northing				
2	19							

3	19							
	Zone	Easting		Northing				
4	19							

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title CHRISTI A. MITCHELL, ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN
 organization MAINE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION date 19 October 2007
 street & number 55 CAPITOL STREET, STATION 65 telephone (207) 287-2132
 city or town AUGUSTA state ME zip code 04333-0065

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items
(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name _____
 street & number _____ telephone _____
 city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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DESCRIPTION

"Rock Rest" is the name given by Hazel and Clayton Sinclair to the home in Kittery, Maine that they operated as a guest house for African American tourists for thirty-one years. The modest property, which includes a main house, garage/guest house, landscaped grounds and a small agricultural outbuilding, is located on the west side of Brave Boat Harbor Road, (Route 103), which runs between the seaside towns of York and Kittery. The property occupies 1.8 acres in a rural setting of dispersed homes separated by woods and fields.

The narrow rectangular lot is strung along Brave Boat Harbor Road from north to south. The main house is positioned close to the road towards the south end of the lot. Immediately to the north is a paved driveway leading directly to the garage/guest house, and behind this is an old poultry house/shed. The overgrown remains of a barbeque pit and vegetable gardens lie south of the garage/guest house, and the immediate dooryard and backyard of the main house features flower gardens, perennial shrubs and flowering trees. North of the buildings is a broad expanse of lawn interplanted with lilac hedges and deciduous trees. A broad bedrock outcrop forms a counter point to old garden beds which meander through the lawn and along the foundation of the guest house. A low rock wall separates the front of the property from the road and the name "Rock Rest" is painted on two of the larger boulders that line the driveway entrance.

Main House. Renovated 1938-1940.

The main house, or family residence, is an L-shaped one and one-half story wood frame building that faces southeast towards the road. (For ease of reference the house will be described as facing east.) The front section measures approximately 34 by 20 feet with an enclosed, full-width porch about 14 feet wide attached to the north end. Extending west from the southwest corner of the house is a 13 by 18 foot one story ell. The side-gable roof over the main section is pierced in the front and back by a three bay shed roof wall dormer. An enclosed, front gable roof entry porch is centered on the building's facade, and a second gable roof entry porch is affixed to the west side of the ell, which is itself covered by a gable roof. Asphalt shingles cover each of the roofs, and the building is clad with white painted asbestos shingles with green painted wood trim around the windows and doors. An external brick chimney is attached to the center of the south elevation; a second chimney rises through the ridge at the north end of the main section of the house. The building sits on a low cement wall over a fieldstone foundation.

As measured on the first floor the facade is five bays wide. Two double-hung windows with two-over-two sash are situated on either side of the three-panel and glass pane door. A pair of large, eight-over-one sash are located in the side porch, and three two-over-two windows are symmetrically positioned in the dormer. On the south elevation there are a pair of two-over-two windows (as well as the chimney) on the front section of the house and two smaller windows in the ell. The west end of the ell has one two-over-two window. On the north side of the ell a pair of windows flank the entry porch. The rear elevation of the front section of the house has two windows on the first floor, and

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four in the dormer. Two additional eight-over-one sash mark the west side of the porch, and four more, plus a side door, line the north side of the porch. The gable ends on either side of the house contain a pair of two-over-two sash windows.

Evidence on the interior of the house, as well as early photographs suggest that this building was erected in the 18th or early 19th century as a low-posted, timber frame, Piscataquis River cape. The ceilings in the main house are approximately six feet two inches high with exposed plates and corner posts in the front rooms. However, the interior finishes (as well as the exterior configuration) all reflect a substantial renovation undertaken by the family between 1938 and 1940, and except where noted, include plaster walls and ceilings, fir floors, and relatively plain trim elements (baseboard, window and door surrounds). Two types of doors prevail: five-panel doors or french doors, generally stained or varnished.

At the center of the house a narrow entrance hall gives access to the straight-run, varnished-pine staircase, with turned newel post and rectangular balusters, and pine paneled walls. To the north is the living room. Now extending the full width of the house, the living room was created by removing an original partition wall between front and back rooms. The back part of the room has faux birch paneling on the walls but the front portion is plastered. The fireplace is set in a simple surround of wide boards and topped with a narrow mantle. South of the stair hall is the dining room. The finishes in this room also include a moulded chair rail. The fireplace in this room is larger and somewhat fancier, and features heat-recirculating 'ventilators' positioned in the wall above the mantle. Along the west wall of this room one door leads to a small bedroom behind the stairs, and another leads to the kitchen. This room, which also has very low ceilings, extends about four feet into the ell; the back line of the main house is demarcated by a transverse ceiling beam. A china cupboard is built into the southwest corner of the room, and the north wall is lined with plywood wall cabinets and linoleum counters. A free standing metal sink, manufactured by Youngstown Steel, and a Monarch electric and wood range are located on the south and east walls respectively. The floors are tiled in linoleum. The remainder of the ell is occupied by a small bathroom and a large, pine-paneled family room/bedroom. On the second floor are two bedrooms on either side of the staircase, and a full bathroom. Tucked under the dormers, these large bedrooms have fir floors and sheet rock covered walls and ceilings.

Guest House / Garage. C. 1948, 1954

The guest house/ garage is a T-shaped, one and one-half story structure erected on a cement block foundation with asbestos siding and an asphalt roof. Described as per its component parts, the structure is essentially an east facing gable roof garage, with north and south side shed roof wall dormers that commence about four feet west of the facade. After a length of twenty-two feet, the building extends five feet to the north and south. This second section of the building is thirteen feet in width and continues the pitch of the roof from the dormers. Exposed rafter tails protrude from the eaves, and brick a chimney rises through the ridge at the center of the building.

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On the east elevation the first floor is almost fully occupied by two wooden, overhead garage doors, above which are two double hung two-over-two wooden sash in the gable peak. The fenestration on the side elevations is irregular. The first floor on the south side has one two-over-two window, and side doors in both the "T" and near the east end of the building. The second floor has four irregularly spaced two-over-two windows of various sizes. The north facade is similar, albeit without the side doors. The west elevation has two widely spaced window bays on the first floor and three more, evenly spaced units on the second floor.

As the name implies, the interior of the guest house/garage is divided between work spaces and guest accommodations. The first floor has a cement floor and the front section was designed as a two-car garage. The western section contains work benches in the southwest corner, and a small toilet is partitioned into the northwest corner. The walls in the back section of the first floor are covered with faux wood paneling, and the space was also used as a casual lounge/recreation room by the guests. A two run stair in the southwest corner of the garage leads to the second floor. On this level are four bedrooms (two in the east over the garage bays, and one each in the northwest and southwest corner), a small sitting room/bedroom, and two full bathrooms. The bedrooms have plasterboard walls and ceilings, wide pine floors, and stained pine trim around the six panel doors and the windows. The guest rooms are brightly painted in shades of yellow, turquoise and coral.

Shed/Poultry House. No date

Immediately behind the guest house/garage is a small one story wood framed outbuilding. The narrow structure has a low-pitched gable roof covered with asphalt shingles, and asbestos shingles clad the walls. It sits on concrete corner blocks. The east elevation has one woden door and two old two-over-two sash, while the gable ends feature larger, six-over-six sash. The interior is unfinished. This building is in a poor state of repair, and the roof is structurally unsound.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Rock Rest was a summer guest house owned by the Sinclair family in Kittery Point, Maine that offered accommodations, fine dining, and excursions to African American tourists for three decades after World War II. As one of only a few African American guest houses in the state, Rock Rest enjoyed considerable success and attracted vacationers from across the country. In response to demand the Sinclair's expanded their home and added guest quarters in a separate building, eventually achieving the capacity to house up to sixteen guests at a time. In addition to the modest buildings, the property retains all of its period furnishings, as well as extensive documentary materials, including correspondence, guest registers, and photographs relating to the business between 1946 and 1977. Taken together, Rock Rest provides the opportunity to holistically evaluate patterns of African American economy, travel and tourism in the post war years. Rock Rest is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the national level of significance under Criterion A as an exceptionally complete and well documented example of a type of lodging that catered to African American tourists in the years before they were guaranteed equal access to eating and sleeping accommodations by law.

Rock Rest was the family home of Clayton and Hazel Colbert Sinclair. Clayton Sinclair came from New York City as a chauffeur for one of the son's of William Dean Howells, who summered in Kittery, Maine. Hazel Colbert also worked in New York City, as a lady's maid for Mrs. Henry Tuck, and traveled with her when she vacationed at her summer house in York. In the summer of 1936 Clayton and Hazel met and they married the following year. The couple returned to Maine the next summer, and Mrs. Sinclair took over as the cook for Mrs. Tuck. At the end of the summer they decided to remain in Maine, and in 1938 they purchased a small old house with a few acres of land in Kittery Point, near the town line with York. According to Mrs. Sinclair, the house was little more than a shack, and the one extant photograph of the house taken before it was remodeled depicts a vernacular, low posted cape with boarded-up windows tight to the eaves. Over the next two years the couple worked on the house, and added dormers on both sides of the roof, asbestos shingles on the walls, rebuilt the chimneys and installed an up-to-date kitchen in the ell. According to a guest book from their housewarming party the family spent their first night in their new home on July 21, 1940.

Clayton Sinclair initially worked for a construction company before obtaining a job at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, first as a laborer then as a chauffeur. After the attack on Pearl Harbor he enlisted in the Navy, and Mrs. Sinclair found a job at the Shipyard as a woodworker's helper, along with several other black women from the area. After the war Clayton Sinclair returned to the shipyard, where he was employed until his retirement in 1967. Upon leaving the shipyard in 1945 Mrs. Sinclair focused her attention on developing her culinary skills, and soon thereafter started a catering business serving 'everything from private family meals to formal affairs for wealthy white summer people and elite Seacoast residents.' (Cunningham and Reardon, p. 186.) Both of the Sinclairs were well known and respected members of the community. They attended the People's Baptist Church in Portsmouth. Mrs. Sinclair was a member of the Woman's League of Voters. Mr.

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Sinclair served on the Kittery Appeal Board and founded the Portsmouth Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and served as its treasurer.

According to the historian Valerie Cunningham, who recorded oral interviews with Hazel Sinclair in 1993, at some point prior to the end of the war the family started lodging visitors, albeit informally. According to Cunningham "All the maids and chauffeurs working for families summering in Maine knew the Sinclairs had a home in Kittery Point. Through word of mouth, friends and friends of friends who came to Maine stayed at the Sinclair's place. With all the folks asking to stay at her home, and with her cooking skills, Hazel realized she had an opportunity." (Bouchared, 2006). In 1946 they chose the name Rock Rest and began to operate their home as a summer guest house.

Initially the Sinclair's guests stayed in their home, but by 1948 this space alone was inadequate, and they replaced their old garage with a two-car garage outfitted with guestrooms on the second story, and a recreation room located in a one-story shed off the back.¹ In that year, the first year for which guest registers are extant, they welcomed twenty-one parties (comprised of one or more guests each), most of whom stayed for a week, between June 19 and September 26th. Based on photographs and documents in the Rock Rest Archives, improvements to the property continued: a porch was added to the east side of the house and several outbuildings were added to the back of the yard. In 1954 the guest house was expanded with the addition of three new rooms and a second bathroom, and in that year 42 parties stayed at Rock Rest. Through the 1950s the Sinclairs averaged approximately 50 parties between June and September, although in 1957 seventy-seven entries were recorded in the guest register. When all the guest rooms were full, Rock Rest could accommodate sixteen guests at a time. Most stayed for a week, some for two, and numerous names reappear year after year. In all, the guest registers record 687 sets of different names between 1948 and 1978, although some of these entries, such as the Mystic Social Club on July 11, 1966, were dinner guests only.

For forty dollars per week in 1957 the guests enjoyed comfortable rooms, a hearty breakfast and home cooked dinner.² Photographs depict guests throwing horseshoes in the back yard, sitting in the gardens, enjoying boating trips, and dressing for dinner. According to Cunningham, who worked at Rock Rest while a teenager in the 1950s:

Rock Rest felt like home. The small dining room usually could welcome one more at the table. If not, the sun porch could accommodate two card tables, each set with one of Hazel's embroidered (for breakfast) or crocheted (for dinner) tablecloths, and a floral centerpiece from her garden. The menu included homemade breads and jams, Clayton's homegrown vegetables, Southern cooking (in the style later called "soul food"), lobster dinner on Sunday, and rich desserts....Day trips from Rock Rest included

¹ The guest house was either erected in 1946 or 1948. Receipts from 1946 indicate that some type of building episode was taking place, but Mrs. Sinclair stated in an oral interview that the garage was built in 1948.

² The charge for a week's stay had increased to \$85.00 by 1973.

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the usual attractions of sight seeing, swimming, clam bakes, picnics, and attending Summer church services at the black church in Portsmouth, People's Baptist Church. (Cunningham and Reardon, p. 186).

Although Rock Rest did not advertise in local or national publications, it was no less a professional operation. Patrons made reservations months in advance. The Sinclairs had postcards (at least two versions) and business cards advertising "Mr. and Mrs. Clayton Sinclair *Great Vacation Spot - Fine Food.*" Stationery and matching envelopes embossed "Rock Rest Harbor Road, Kittery Point, Maine" were provided in the guest rooms. Mrs. Sinclair kept detailed account books for the business and recorded, among other things, the annual amount spent on the Sunday lobster dinners and the number of chickens they raised in the backyard. The only signs the Sinclair's displayed were the hand painted rocks at the end of the driveway, and although some of the immediate neighbors were unawares of their business, their reputation stretched across the country. [See discussion below.]

With the rise of the automobile age, tourists of all colors took to the road. While the hotels and motels in Maine were not officially segregated by color, there was a great reluctance in many places to rent rooms to African Americans. According to E. Edward Cummings, in nearby Old Orchard Beach, "[The hotels] wouldn't say we don't take black people, or Negroes. It was just understood." (Lemley, 1993). Much of this discrimination was hush-hush, but one blatant incident made the newspapers in 1962 when an African American actress performing with a touring company at the Ogunquit Playhouse was refused accommodations at seven local hotels. After the initial report, one innkeeper wrote a letter to the editor in which he proudly proclaimed his prejudicial intent not to provide rooms for African Americans. After several further news articles, the State Attorney General's office investigated the event, but later declined to pursue court action, stating that the State's anti-discrimination laws had not been breached!³

For African American tourists, who vacationed in their automobiles, a trip up the coast or into the mountains was not a casual jaunt: they could not be assured of finding accommodations, restaurants, gas stations, or other services along the way that would entertain their business. This was by no means only an issue in Maine. Although this state did not have any 'Jim Crow' laws on the books, it has always been a state with a very small African American population – even in the larger cities.⁴ But that did not stop black tourists from wanting to travel to 'Vacationland,' as Maine was nicknamed. As explained through the America on the Move Exhibition, held at the Smithsonian:

Roads were open to all motorists, but the facilities that lined them were not. African

³A series of newspaper articles chronicling this event are gathered together in the research files of Shoshana Hoose, Anchor of the Soul Collection, Box 1, at the University of Southern Maine.

⁴The Federal Population Census, 1950 recorded 1,221 black residents in Maine, out of a total of 913,774 residents, or 1% of the total population. This figure had increased to 2,800 black residents, or 3 % of the population, by 1970. (Gibson and Jung, 2002).

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Americans who could afford to purchase a car declared the automobile was a way to avoid the ignominy of the Jim Crow car on the railroads. As George Schuyler declared in 1930, "...Negroes who can do so purchase an automobile as soon as possible in order to be free of discomfort, discrimination, segregation, and insult." But, in practice, the discriminatory policies of hotels, tourist cabins, and other lodgings made highway travel difficult, and tarnished the "freedom" of the open road. African Americans responded by creating African American holiday resorts such as Idelwild, Michigan, and by creating guides to help travelers negotiate their way through the racially charged American terrain. (America on the Move Exhibition, National Museum of American History.)

Word of guest houses, boarding houses and motels that invited patronage regardless of color spread in African American circles, and facilities such as Rock Rest developed a loyal following. In Maine, in addition to the Sinclairs' establishment, there was the Cummings Guest House in Old Orchard Beach (NR: 04000744), and a small resort, now destroyed, known as the Jewell Inn in York Beach that had a lodge with a dining room, jukebox, and dance floor as well as tourist cabins. When all the established facilities were full an informal network of African American residents was activated to lodge unexpected guests in spare bedrooms throughout the state. Eventually tourist guides for African Americans were created to help facilitate their travels. The 1946 edition of the The Negro Motorist Green-Book included a listing for tourist homes in Augusta, Gardiner, and Bangor, and one hotel and two tourist homes in Portland. Although they did not advertise in the Green-Book, the Sinclairs owned a copy, which they used when they took their annual vacations in the fall. According to Clayton Sinclair, by 1967 they had visited all but four of the states.

It is important to understand and evaluate the significance of Rock Rest is within a national context. The economic boom that occurred in the years after the second World War did not bypass African Americans; as with other Americans the economy provided them with an increased standard of living. This is not to say that segregation had been eradicated – it had not, especially in the southern states – but for many of those who lived in the north, the Midwest and the west the post-War years were accompanied by steady employment at decent wages. The guests at Rock Rest ran the gamut from civil servants to domestic servants to professionals; what they shared among themselves and with a great percentage of the American population was a desire to visit Maine on vacation.

Analysis of the guest registers reveal that patrons traveled from twenty-eight states to stay at Rock Rest between 1948 and 1977. Of these, the greatest number were from Massachusetts (182 parties), New Jersey (155 parties) and New York (127 parties) – all states within a reasonable drive to southern Maine. Patrons also visited from Florida, Indiana, Illinois, California, Michigan, Oklahoma, Wisconsin and Washington. In contrast, only four parties registered with Maine addresses and four more came from New Hampshire. From this fact alone it seems clear that Rock Rest's significance, at least in terms of its clientele, lies outside a state or local context.

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By no means is Rock Rest alone as a facility that catered to African American travelers. Boarding houses and hotels peppered the landscape, especially in segregated communities, and tourist houses, guest houses and resorts occurred in communities throughout the nation. In recent years these facilities have been increasingly listed in the National Register. However, it is important to consider how some of these properties differ in contrast to Rock Rest. The Sinclair's establishment focused on vacation travelers: it was not a boarding house in a city or town that catered to workers or lodgers.⁵ Rock Rest was a seasonal facility, not a year round hotel that alternately housed folks passing through town and those visiting for longer periods of time.⁶ When the season was over the Sinclairs closed Rock Rest and went on vacation themselves. And even though Rock Rest capitalized on the mystique of Maine (lobster dinners and clambakes), it was not a resort, a development, or a vacation community. Although part of Rock Rest's importance is the function it played in the arena of recreation and entertainment, it was a relatively small scale operation as compared to the summer community at Fox Lake Indiana (NR:01000360) or at Idlewild, an African American resort community in Michigan.⁷ And while the theme of segregation in public accommodation has been the focus of at least one Multiple Property nomination to the National Register in recent years, Rock Rest existed in the less understood context of *de facto* segregation.⁸ At the other end of the spectrum, the National Park Service completed a draft National Historic landmark Theme Study on "Civil Rights in America: Racial Desegregation in Public Accommodations" in 2004. Rock Rest does not fit the criteria for listing as outlined in these documents – it was not a site that overtly facilitated changes to the law, or was associated with people or events associated with desegregation activities on a national level. Indeed, after Civil Rights legislation was passed in Maine in 1971 the need for facilities such as the Rock Rest was reduced, at least in theory, but the guests continued to come each year until Clayton Sinclair became ill⁹. Simply put, Rock Rest was a small scale destination that offered black patrons from across the country the opportunity to comfortably and safely vacation in Maine.

What sets Rock Rest apart from the untold number of similar venues throughout the nation (including the Cummings' Guest House in Old Orchard Beach), are the archives and furnishings that accompany this property. The last year that the Sinclairs accepted guests was 1977; Clayton Sinclair

⁵ Examples of this type of accommodation include the Bing Rooming House, Hillsborough Florida, (NR:02001009); and the Mrs. Harriet Cornwell Tourist Home in Columbia, South Carolina (National Register nomination pending, 10/19/2007).

⁶ Examples of this type of accommodation include the Tookes House, Tallahassee, Florida (NR:0100004); the Kilby Hotel in High Point North Carolina (NR: 82003460) and possibly the Rhone Hotel, in the New Bern Historic District, in North Carolina (NR:73001325)

⁷ Polley references several historic summer communities that catered to African Americans in Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts, Highland Beach near Annapolis, Virginia, as well as Colorado, California, Washington state and British Columbia. As of July 2007, consultants were being sought by the Michigan SHPO to prepare a district nomination for the National Register eligible Idlewild Historic District.

⁸ Students at the University of South Carolina recently authored the Multiple Property Listing "Resources Associated with Segregation in Columbia, South Carolina, 1880 – 1960. Received at the National Register August 20, 2006.

⁹ 5 M.R.S.A. sec. 4591 (2002).

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died the following year, and Hazel Sinclair passed in 1995. The property then descended to their son, Clayton Sinclair, Jr., who rented the furnished building to a tenant until 2004, and offered his parents' papers to the historian Valerie Cunningham. An initial evaluation of the Rock Rest and Sinclair Family Archives yielded 12 linear feet of processed material (including correspondence, photographs, guests registers, account books, receipts and personal papers) and an approximately 10 – 12 linear feet of unprocessed material, mostly consisting of photographs and correspondence. The furnishings that remain with the property range from family pieces (probably obtained by the newlyweds to outfit their new home) to items purchased specifically to furnish the guest quarters. The appliances in the kitchen, the tea service and china in the cupboards (including early 1960s lobster plates), the furniture in the dining room, living room, porch and bedrooms, the headboards and bureaus in the guest rooms and even the board games on the shelves in the porch have not changed since the Sinclair's welcomed their last patron. This material, to date yet not fully analyzed or inventoried, adds to the national significance of Rock Rest and provides at the least, the opportunity to research questions into the social and material culture of middle-class African Americans, and on a broader scale, to investigate the patterns of post World War II entertainment and recreation as experienced by African American tourists.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundaries of the property are depicted on the Town of Kittery tax map number 69, lot number 4.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

In 1938 the Sinclairs bought land from Viola E. Blake that included the house and lot at 167 Brave Boat Harbor Road, as well as several small parcels across the street. Over time these parcels, which were used primarily for small-scale farming, were sold. The boundaries of the nominated property as described above represent all the remaining property directly associated with, and retaining the period resources from, Rock Rest.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

Photograph 1 of 7

Christi A. Mitchell

Maine Historic Preservation Commission

9 May 2007

Main house, guest house/garage, driveway
and back yard; facing southwest.

Photograph 7 of 7

Christi A. Mitchell

Maine Historic Preservation Commission

13 May 2005

Interior of main house, kitchen; facing
southwest.

Photograph 2 of 7

Christi A. Mitchell

Maine Historic Preservation Commission

13 May 2005

Main house, east and north elevations, facing
southwest.

Photograph 3 of 7

Christi A. Mitchell

Maine Historic Preservation Commission

13 May 2005

Guest house, south elevation; facing north.

Photograph 4 of 7

Christi A. Mitchell

Maine Historic Preservation Commission

9 May 2007

Interior of main house, living room; facing
northwest.

Photograph 5 of 7

Christi A. Mitchell

Maine Historic Preservation Commission

13 May 2005

Interior of main house, dining room; facing
southeast.

Photograph 6 of 7

Christi A. Mitchell

Maine Historic Preservation Commission

13 May 2005

Interior of main house, kitchen; facing
northeast.