



CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT FOR THE MANSION GROUNDS



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AUWAERTER



# CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT FOR THE MANSION GROUNDS

MARSH-BILLINGS-ROCKEFELLER NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

VOLUME I: SITE HISTORY



# CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT FOR THE MANSION GROUNDS

MARSH-BILLINGS-ROCKEFELLER  
NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK  
WOODSTOCK, VERMONT

*Volume I:*

Site History

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The **Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation** promotes the preservation of significant landscapes through research, planning, stewardship, and education. The Center accomplishes its mission in collaboration with a network of partners including national parks, universities, government agencies and private nonprofit organizations. This report was developed through a cooperative agreement with the Faculty of Landscape Architecture at the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry, Syracuse, New York.

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**Cover photo:** The Billings family on the Mansion lawn, 1887. Billings Family Archives, Woodstock, Vermont.

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- 7.4 From left, Park Superintendent Rolf Diamant, National Park Service Regional Director Marie Rust, Vermont Senator Patrick Leahy, and Laurance S. Rockefeller at the dedication ceremony for the Carriage Barn visitor center and offices, August 7, 1999. Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park 1999 Annual Report.
- 7.5 The Charles A. Platt-designed bench at the far end of the Long Terrace, originally designed in 1899 and reconstructed in 1999, photographed 2000. SUNY ESF.
- 7.6 View west through the Long Terrace toward the Platt bench illustrating shaded and overgrown condition of the hemlock hedges, summer 1994. Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation.

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## FOREWORD

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park is the first national park to tell the story of conservation history and the evolving nature of land stewardship in America. The park was the boyhood home of George Perkins Marsh, author of *Man and Nature* (1864) and one of the first global environmental thinkers. In 1869 Frederick Billings, strongly influenced by Marsh, established a progressive country estate on the former Marsh farm. Billings's granddaughter, Mary French Rockefeller, and her husband, conservationist Laurance S. Rockefeller, made a gift of the 550-acre forest and their residence to establish the Park in 1992. The park continues that tradition of land stewardship with a wide range of public programs, research projects, and publications, including this Cultural Landscape Report on the residential portion of the estate known as the Mansion grounds.

As a new national park we are very pleased to undertake this comprehensive report on the Mansion grounds. They are a key element of the park, constituting a beautifully conceived and sustained transition from the residential grounds to the forest, and teaching a rich array of lessons about the role of the designed and cultivated landscape in our understanding of conservation stewardship. Our interpretation of the park's history and significance, and our ongoing care of the site, is immeasurably strengthened by the rigorous scholarship and keen eye for detail that the author, John Auwaerter, has brought to this study. We are grateful to him, to Professor George W. Curry of the State University of New York at Syracuse, and to Robert Page and Gina Heald of the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, for making this handsome and informative Cultural Landscape Report a lasting asset to the park, and an invaluable guide for our visitors.

Rolf Diamant, Superintendent



## INTRODUCTION

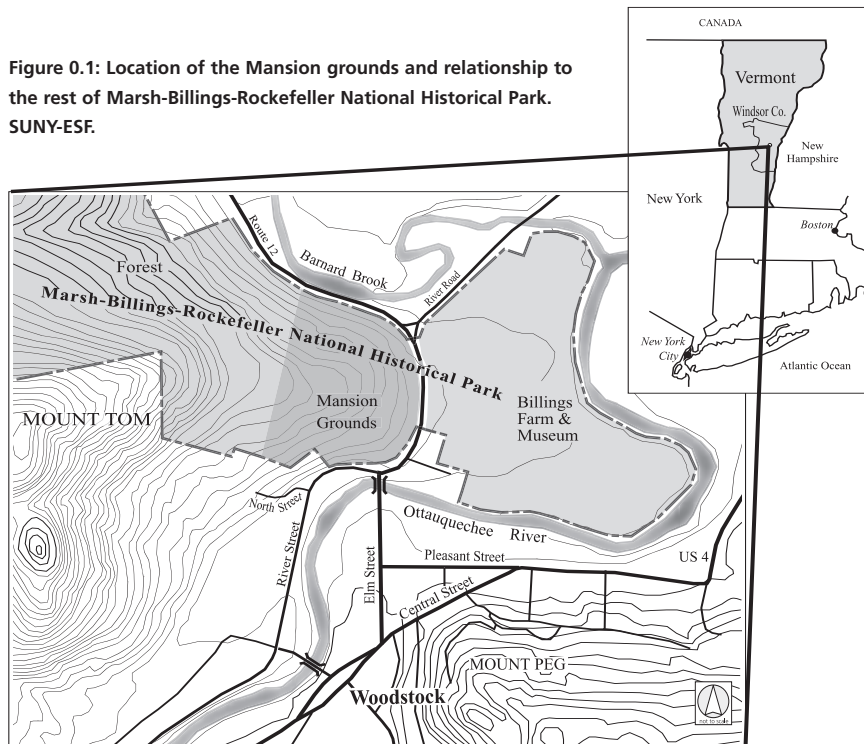
“Another perfectly beautiful day—the green of the landscape is something wonderful.” So confided Frederick Billings to his diary on May 29, 1877 as he looked out from the Mansion, his cherished home in Woodstock Vermont, to the surrounding gardens, fields, and forest. Billings often reflected on the beauty of the landscape at his country place, a farm that he purchased in 1869 and over the course of a quarter century transformed into a model of progressive agriculture, forestry, and landscape design. In his stewardship of the land, Billings followed many of the same conservation principles advocated by the conservationist George Perkins Marsh, who was born and raised on the same property earlier in the century. Improvement of rural society, protection and proper use of natural resources, and cultivation of landscape beauty were fundamental to Frederick Billings’s stewardship practices and imparted to the landscape a feeling of harmony with nature. Through the late twentieth century, Billings’s children and grandchildren continued to manage the property in much the same manner, helping to ensure its legacy as one of Woodstock’s most significant cultural landscapes.

Today, the historic core of the Billings Estate is preserved within the boundaries of Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller

National Historical Park, the first national park to focus on conservation history and the evolving nature of land stewardship in America. The park, established by Congress in 1992 based on a gift by Laurance S. and Mary F. Rockefeller, consists of the estate’s three main components: Mansion grounds, forest, and farm. The Mansion grounds and forest comprise 555 acres gifted by the Rockefellers to the people of the United States and administered by the National Park Service. Across Elm Street from the Mansion grounds is the farm, which opened to the public in 1983 as the Billings Farm & Museum. Eighty-eight acres of the farm were included within park boundaries, but remain under the private ownership and operation of The Woodstock Foundation, Inc.

This history of the Mansion grounds was prepared in order to assist the National Park Service to steward the landscape with the same level of care that it was given by the Marsh, Billings, and Rockefeller families. It is one component of a larger project, known as a Cultural Landscape Report (CLR), the purpose of which is to document the history and significance of the Mansion grounds and to provide a strategy for the short- and long-term management of its historic landscape.<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 0.1: Location of the Mansion grounds and relationship to the rest of Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park. SUNY-ESF.**



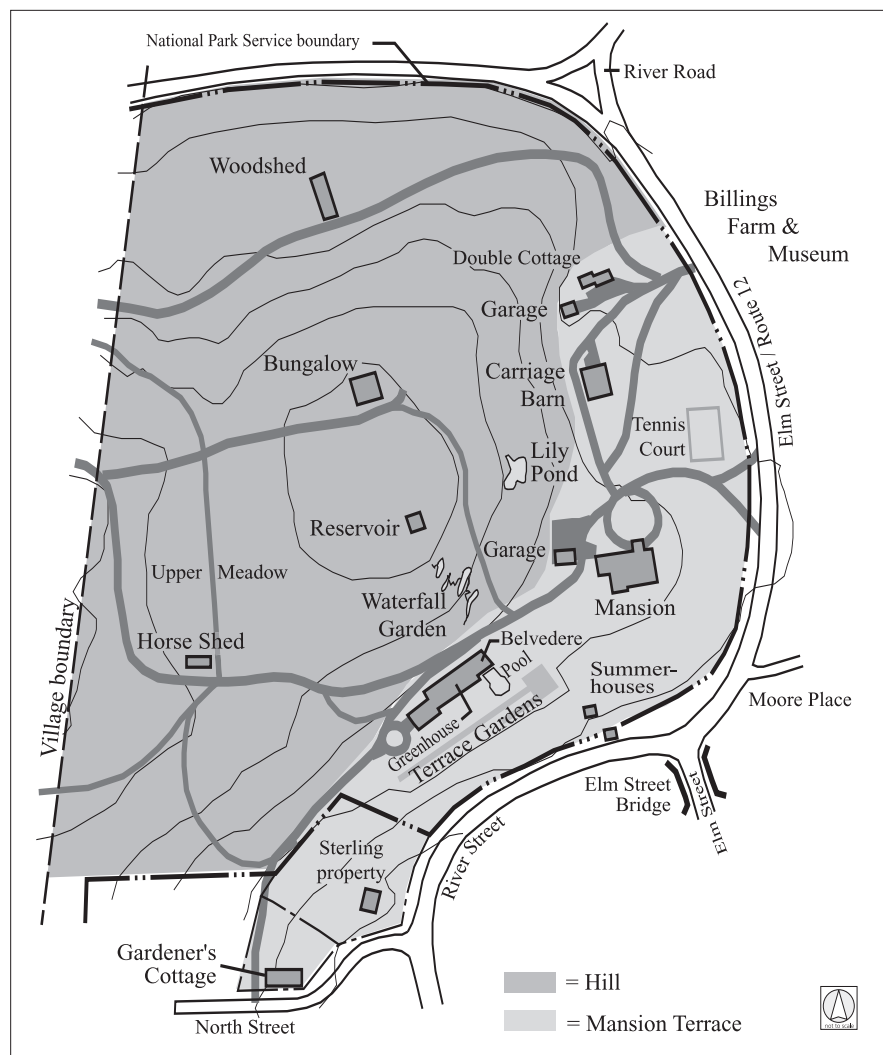
The Mansion grounds CLR is divided into two parts: this Site History; and a technical landscape management document that will provide park staff with information necessary to understand the history of individual landscape features, to determine whether they contribute to the historic significance of the property, and to decide the measures needed to preserve them. As identified in the park’s General Management Plan (National Park Service and Billings Farm & Museum, 1998), the landscape will be managed to convey a sense of the site’s evolution through the occupancy of the Marsh, Billings, and Rockefeller families, rather than

depicting any particular historic period. Changes undertaken during recent history will be retained, and visitors will experience the Mansion grounds landscape largely as the Rockefellers left it in 1997.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Mansion grounds are located at the eastern foot of Mount Tom overlooking a broad floodplain of the Ottauquechee River in the Village of Woodstock, Windsor County, Vermont. To the east of the Mansion grounds is Billings Farm & Museum, and to the west, the forest portion of the park. [Figure 0.1] Situated at the head of Elm Street, one of the main thoroughfares extending from the center of Woodstock, the Mansion grounds occupy about thirty-four acres, which rise gently to a terrace and then more steeply up a foothill. These two land forms, identified in this CLR as the “Mansion terrace” and the “hill,” form the general organization of the landscape—the former formal and manicured, the latter informal and naturalistic. [Figure 0.2]

The centerpiece of the landscape is the Mansion, a two-and-a-half story Queen Anne-style brick house rebuilt in 1885–1886, the core of which is the earlier Marsh house built in 1805–1807. The Mansion is surrounded by curving drives, lawns, and gardens initially developed according to an 1869 conceptual plan by landscape gardener Robert Morris Copeland. Also on the Mansion terrace is the Carriage House, built in 1895 on the foundations of a c.1870 building; a c.1870 caretaker’s cottage; two rustic summerhouses built between c.1872 and 1874; and the Belvedere, Bowling Alley, and Greenhouse complex, remnants of a larger complex initially constructed between 1872 and 1874.



**Figure 0.2: Diagram of the major landscape features of the Mansion grounds. The two shaded areas together indicate the historic limits of the Mansion grounds. SUNY-ESF.**

Near the Mansion is the tennis court, built in c.1887 over an earlier croquet ground on the site of the original Marsh house built in 1789. The main entrance drive was redesigned in 1902 by Martha Brookes Brown Hutcheson; and the Terrace Gardens were built between 1894 and 1899 according to the design of Charles A. Platt, modified in 1912 and 1913 according to a planting plan by Ellen Biddle Shipman, and subsequently altered in the 1950s and 1960s. Beyond these gardens is the Gardener’s Cottage, which was historically part of the Mansion grounds along with the adjoining Sterling property, but is today under private ownership.

The landscape of the Mansion terrace is framed along the slopes of the hill by plantations of Norway spruce that remain from Frederick Billings's first reforestation plantings on the property undertaken in c.1874. In the shade of the Norway spruce and an adjoining native oak grove are the Lily Pond and Waterfall Garden, part of a rustic landscape developed largely by Billings's botanical-minded daughter Elizabeth, beginning in the 1880s. In the 1960s, these gardens were partly redesigned by Swiss-born landscape designer Zenon Schreiber. Farther up the hill is the Craftsman-style Bungalow, an addition to the rustic landscape dating to 1917. On the level top of the hill is the Upper Meadow, a remnant of the Billings kitchen garden that later served as a horse pasture for the Rockefellers. On the north slope of the hill is the Woodshed, built in 1876, and the main carriage road to Mount Tom and the hilltop lake known as the "Pogue." Adjoining the Woodshed are the remains of the Vermont Native Flora Exhibit, a woodland garden built in c.1980 for use by guests of the Woodstock Inn and other local tourists.

Beyond the hill, the Mansion grounds are bordered to the west by forested slopes with scattered fields that extend up to the double peaks of Mount Tom and the mountain-top pond, the Pogue. Like the Mansion grounds, this forested land is traversed by a network of roads laid out largely by Frederick Billings to serve both forestry and recreational uses. To the east of the Mansion grounds on the east side of Elm Street is the main part of the estate's farm, now the Billings Farm & Museum, composed of a large floodplain meadow with a complex of farm and museum buildings along its north side. To the south of the Mansion grounds spanning the Ottauquechee River and leading to the center of Woodstock is the Elm Street Bridge, funded in part by Frederick Billings, and built in 1869.

## ORGANIZATION AND RESEARCH

The Mansion grounds were historically the domestic component of the much larger Billings Estate. First defined as a domestic landscape in the 1869 plan by Robert Morris Copeland, they were subsequently defined as a distinct landscape within the larger estate in surveys of the estate

made in the 1880s. Although Frederick Billings devoted much of the hill within the Mansion grounds to his reforestation program, this landscape also served domestic-related functions, evident through vegetable and rustic woodland gardens. Subsequent generations of Billings, including the Rockefellers, continued to use the landscape for the same purposes. In its earlier history as part of the Marsh Place, only a small portion of the Mansion grounds served domestic purposes. Much of the land was devoted to pasture.

This Site History is organized into seven chapters defined by patterns of ownership and land use. Each chapter opens with a general discussion of the historic contexts that influenced the development of the Mansion grounds, such as national trends in landscape design and conservation. Following this general discussion is an overview of the estate's history during the period, and then a detailed discussion of the development of the Mansion grounds landscape, generally organized by chronology and physical location.

Research for this history focused on the resources of the Billings Family Archives, which are housed in the 1890 Farm House at the Billings Farm & Museum. These archives provided a rich source of information that included historic photographs, family diaries, correspondence, maps, and plans. Also important were the records of the Billings Farm, now in the Billings Farm & Museum Library. The library's fiscal receipts, diaries, and correspondence from the farm provided detailed information about the Mansion grounds, since it was part of the same estate and the farm staff were often involved in the upkeep of its landscape. Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park maintains a database of primary and secondary source material on the Mansion grounds and the Billings family, as well as documentation on existing landscape conditions. Other local repositories that provided important information included the Woodstock Historical Society, Norman Williams Public Library, Woodstock Resort Corporation, Vermont Historical Society, University of Vermont (George Perkins Marsh papers), and the Town of Woodstock tax and property records.

Because several nationally-renowned designers worked on the Mansion grounds, repositories holding records of their work were also researched, including Columbia University (papers of Charles A. Platt), Cornell University (papers of Ellen Biddle Shipman), Morris County Park Commission (papers of Martha Brookes Brown Hutcheson), New York Botanical Garden (records of Lord & Burnham Co.), North American Rock Garden Society (information on Zenon Schreiber), and the Peabody Essex Museum (papers of Robert Morris Copeland), among others. These repositories unfortunately contained no documentation on the Mansion grounds other than what is already held by the Billings Family Archives and the park. Much information, however, was gathered through interviews or correspondence with historians or family of the designers.

Documentation on the landscape during the Rockefellers' tenure between 1954 and 1997 was found in family photographs, plans, and some receipts in the park collection, park planning files, and through interviews with family members and park staff who worked on the grounds. Although Laurance Rockefeller was not personally available for interview, his associates in Woodstock and New York provided information and consulted with him about this report. His and Mary Rockefeller's personal records that may pertain to the history of the Mansion grounds are in the Rockefeller Family Archives in Tarrytown, New York, but these materials were not available for research at the time of this writing due to archival access rules regarding living members of the family. Because of the limited information available, this period in the estate's history will benefit from future research, as well as a longer-term perspective.

## **HISTORIC OVERVIEW**

The existing character of the Mansion grounds is largely due to the vision of one man: Frederick Billings. Billings purchased the property from Charles Marsh (Junior) in 1869 and soon began a thorough program of improvements, establishing a model of stewardship that would endure for generations. For over fifty years, Frederick Billings's granddaughter, Mary French and her husband,

Laurance S. Rockefeller, cared for this landscape in the Billings family tradition of stewardship. The Mansion grounds have always been a part of the larger estate, which extended over 1,000 acres. The estate was subdivided, and then partly reassembled by the Rockefellers. Known locally by different names, including "Marsh Place," "Marsh Hill," "The Hill," "The Billings Estate," and "Billings Farm," the Mansion grounds were the domestic component of a working farm and forest.

### **Native Landscape and European Settlement, Pre-1789**

The natural environment of the Mansion grounds began to take on their present character about 12,500 years ago following retreat of the Wisconsin glacier. Mount Tom, formed from erosion of the plateau of the Vermont Piedmont, became covered in a northern hardwoods forest. At its eastern foot, the Ottauquechee River developed a floodplain (known regionally as an "intervale") that was probably used as a seasonal camp or village by the native Abenaki people for hundreds of years prior to European settlement. On and around the Mansion grounds, the first European settlers arrived in the late 1760s; they built rudimentary houses and cleared fields over the course of the next two decades. By the 1780s, the Mansion grounds were part of a fifty-acre farm purchased by James Cady, and consisted of old-growth forest and recently cleared pasture. Cady's log house was located just east of the Mansion grounds on the western edge of the intervale meadow.

### **The Marsh Place, 1789–1869**

During this period, the Mansion grounds consisted of domestic grounds and pastures of a large farm known as the Marsh Place. Charles Marsh was a prominent lawyer, developer, and philanthropist in the village. In 1789, he purchased the fifty-acre Cady farm and built a frame house above a large shelving rock, overlooking the broad farm meadow that occupied much of the Ottauquechee River intervale. Marsh soon added significant acreage to the farm, extending it west up Mount Tom and east across the entire intervale. Between 1805 and 1807, Marsh and his wife Susan Perkins had a large, Federal-style brick house (core

of the present Mansion) built in a prominent position at the head of Elm Street, overlooking the interval and the village and set within an orthogonal set of lanes. It was here that the statesman and conservationist George Perkins Marsh grew up and gained his earliest experience with the landscape, although he did not spend his adult life here. Years later, he wrote *Man and Nature*, considered to be the fountainhead of the American conservation movement. In 1848, Charles Marsh left the three hundred acres of the farm to his youngest son, Charles. For the next two decades, the junior Charles Marsh ran the farm, but made few improvements.

#### **Frederick Billings Era, 1869–1890**

Between 1869 and 1890, Frederick Billings transformed the Marsh Place into a fashionable country place, establishing the character of the Mansion grounds that would endure for generations. Following his return from the West where he had become a successful real estate lawyer and businessman, Frederick Billings purchased the Marsh Place from Charles Marsh (Junior) in 1869, and established there his family's year-round home, where he and his wife Julia would raise seven children. Billings was not only returning to his hometown, but also following an increasing trend among the elite to establish pastoral homes outside growing industrial cities. In the New England tradition of gentleman farming and through progressive conservation practices such as those of George Perkins Marsh, Frederick Billings sought to make his country place a catalyst for improving the languishing rural countryside. He revived the farm based on scientific farming principles, rebuilt the Marsh house in the fashionable Stick style, and soon began a series of landscape improvements for the surrounding grounds according to the 1869 conceptual plan by Robert Morris Copeland. Copeland's plan provided the direction for Billings to transform the orthogonal organization of the Marsh Place into a stylized rural landscape based on the popular Natural or English style of landscape gardening, with winding drives, expansive lawns, and informal groupings of trees, as well as a rustic summerhouse, greenhouses, fashionable carpet bedding, and a kitchen garden. At the back of the Mansion, Billings began an innovative reforestation program on the worn-out

hill pastures at the back of the Mansion. He continued to refine the landscape over the course of his twenty-five years on the property; however, aside from a major reconstruction of the Mansion in 1885–1886, he made few substantial alterations from what he initially established during the 1870s.

#### **Estate Era, 1890–1914**

Following Frederick Billings's death in 1890, the affairs of his Woodstock estate were managed by trustees, family members, and the farm manager. In his will, Billings specified that the estate, including the Mansion grounds, would remain intact through the lifetime of his wife, Julia, and should continue to be updated and expanded. His daughters, Laura, Mary Montagu, and Elizabeth, made a series of improvements over the course of the next quarter century that incorporated new responses to the industrial age, although they carefully preserved the overall character of the landscape that their father had established. Following the addition of "old-fashioned" plantings in the early 1890s, the grounds were updated from 1894 through 1899 with fashionable Neoclassical Revival-style gardens designed by Charles A. Platt—one of his earliest landscape commissions. At the turn of the century, the main entrance drive and plantings around the Mansion were redesigned in a neoclassical manner according to the 1902 design of Martha Brookes Brown Hutcheson, one of the earliest known commissions for this pioneering female landscape architect. Under Elizabeth's lead between 1912 and 1913, Ellen Biddle Shipman, another first generation female landscape architect, redesigned the flowerbeds in the Terrace Gardens, a project that was also one of her earliest commissions. In keeping with the family's conservation sensibilities, Elizabeth also developed a series of rustic and botanical gardens on the hillside, including a fernery, water gardens, and an arboretum. Here, she collected ferns and other plants as part of her effort to document the native plants of the Woodstock area.

#### **French-Billings Era, 1914–1954**

Following the death of Julia Billings in 1914, the estate was divided among the Billings children, with the Mansion grounds under the ownership of Mary Montagu (by then



married to John French) and Elizabeth Billings. Over the course of forty years, the two women preserved the core of the estate and maintained the Mansion grounds with few improvements aside from the addition of a rustic bungalow on the hill and the addition of a swimming pool. For various reasons, they did not improve the Mansion grounds as had been done in the past. The Mansion was painted gray and, in 1930, most of the greenhouses were torn down. Following Elizabeth's death in 1944, her wild gardens fell into decline. Despite this, the extended Billings family continued to enjoy the Mansion grounds as a seasonal home. Upon the death of Mary Montagu Billings French in 1951, her estate was divided among her three children: John French, Mary French Rockefeller, and Elizabeth French Hitchcock.

#### **Rockefeller Era, 1954–1997**

The division of Mary Montagu Billings French's Woodstock estate was finalized in 1954. Mary French Rockefeller came to own the Mansion grounds and an adjoining forty acres in the forest. With Mary's sensitivity toward the history of the landscape and her husband Laurance's conservation ethic, they updated the Mansion grounds for use as their seasonal home in a way that respected its historic character and restored it as a model of rural landscape design. In the Mansion lawn and Terrace Gardens, the Rockefellers had most of the shrubs, walks, and hedges removed to provide a simpler, more open character. By 1961, the renovations were largely complete and the Rockefellers began their seasonal use of the Mansion. During the 1960s, they continued to make improvements to the landscape, largely under the direction of Swiss-born landscape designer Zenon Schreiber and their head gardener, Carl Bergstrom. Schreiber designed a series of rock gardens along the pool and Flower Garden, and redesigned Elizabeth's Fernery. At the same time, Laurance Rockefeller began to plan for long-term preservation and use of the Billings Estate based on his conservation philosophy, which was not unlike that practiced by Frederick Billings; and by which he sought to use the estate for the benefit of the community. In 1974, he purchased the main farm and Mount Tom forest owned by Billings Farm, Inc., which brought together the historic core of the Billings

Estate under his and Mary's ownership. Simultaneously, The Woodstock Foundation Inc., founded in 1968 by the Rockefellers, conducted a folklife research project, which in turn led to the opening of the Billings Farm & Museum in 1983. By the early 1990s, the Rockefellers were planning for a parallel park or museum for the Mansion grounds and forest.

In 1992, Congress passed legislation establishing what was initially called Marsh-Billings National Historical Park, Mary and Laurance S. Rockefeller's gift to the United States of 555 acres encompassing the Mansion grounds and forest. The legislation identified the park's purpose to interpret the history and evolution of conservation stewardship in America, recognize and interpret the contributions in that history of George Perkins Marsh, Frederick Billings and his family, and Mary and Laurance Rockefeller, and to preserve the Mansion and its surrounding lands. The Billings Farm & Museum remained under the private ownership and operation as a "protection zone" within park boundaries. At the end of 1992, the Rockefellers donated the Mansion grounds and Mount Tom forest to the United States, retaining a right of life tenure on the property. They continued to live at the property for several years while they helped to plan for the park. The conclusion of their occupancy was scheduled for the beginning of 1998. However, in 1997, Mary Rockefeller died. Laurance Rockefeller gave up life tenure as planned, effective January 1, 1998.

#### **National Park Service Stewardship of the Mansion Grounds**

In June 1998, Marsh-Billings National Historical Park opened to the public following almost five years of planning. The National Park Service, working in cooperation with The Woodstock Foundation, Inc., determined that the Mansion grounds would be maintained much as the Rockefellers had left the landscape, illustrating its development over the course of more than two hundred years. In 1999, Congress renamed the park "Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park" to recognize the significant contributions of Laurance S. Rockefeller to the field of conservation.

During this year, renovation of the Carriage Barn into a visitor center and park offices was completed, and several minor additions were made to the Mansion grounds to facilitate public access, including railings, signs, benches, and outdoor lighting. Today, the National Park Service provides public access to the Mansion grounds through guided tours, and continues to allow free public access to the adjoining Mount Tom forest, maintaining a Billings family tradition that had existed for generations.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> In March 2000, a parallel CLR (Site History and Existing Conditions) was prepared for the forested Mount Tom lands entitled “Cultural Landscape Report for the Forest at Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park.” It was prepared by the University of Vermont in conjunction with the National Park Service and the Conservation Study Institute.

<sup>2</sup> The Billings Family Archives are the property of The Woodstock Foundation, Incorporated, and are located at Billings Farm & Museum in Woodstock, Vermont.

<sup>3</sup> The origin of the name “Mansion” is not certain, but it may have started with townspeople: see *Vermont Standard*, 23 December 1886. The term was used by the family during Frederick Billings’s lifetime; the earliest known use is in the Billings Farm Memo Diary, September 1885, Billings Farm & Museum Archives. In 1890, the year of Frederick Billings’s death, “Mansion” was used to identify the Billings house in the inventory of the estate’s buildings: “Buildings on property of the Estate at Woodstock, Vt. October 1st 1890,” Billings Family Archives. The word “grounds” was used by the Billings family to identify the landscape around the Mansion as early as 1870: diary of Julia Parmly Billings, 24 June 1870, Billings Family Archives.



## I. NATIVE LANDSCAPE AND EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT, PRE-1789

The historic character of the Mansion grounds is due in large part to the cultural customs of agriculture and landscape gardening practiced over more than two hundred years by the Marsh, Billings, and Rockefeller families. Their practices, however, were strongly influenced by the native, natural environment—the hills, rocks and soils, rivers and streams, and flora—that had evolved over the course of millennia. Prior to European settlement in the late eighteenth century, a vast forest extended largely unbroken across Vermont. Within this forest, the land that would later become the Mansion grounds had a distinctive character shaped by the gentle slope of Mount Tom and its rocky outcroppings, the course and flood plain terraces of the Ottauquechee River, and the enclosure of the surrounding hills. This sheltered but accessible location with its abundant natural resources was an ideal location for human habitation long before the first European settlement there in the late eighteenth century.

### THE VERMONT PIEDMONT

The geographic setting of the Mansion grounds has remained largely unchanged since the end of the Ice Age about 12,500 years ago. Located in east-central Vermont, this site at the eastern foot of Mount Tom overlooks a broad floodplain (known as an “intervale” in New England) of the Ottauquechee River valley. The Ottauquechee River joins the Connecticut River, New England’s largest waterway and Vermont’s boundary with New Hampshire, about 10 miles to the east of the Mansion grounds.

Woodstock is within the physiographic region known as the Central Plateau or Vermont Piedmont.<sup>1</sup> [Figure 1.1] The word “piedmont” translates as “foot of a mountain” and the term is used for this region because the land appears to be a foothill region of the Green Mountains to the west. Around Woodstock, the hills rise to between 1,200 and 1,500 feet above sea level; the major valley floors are between seven- and eight-hundred feet above sea level. Mount Tom, which rises abruptly above Woodstock village to the west of the Mansion grounds, reaches a height of 1,340 feet. By contrast, the elevation of Killington

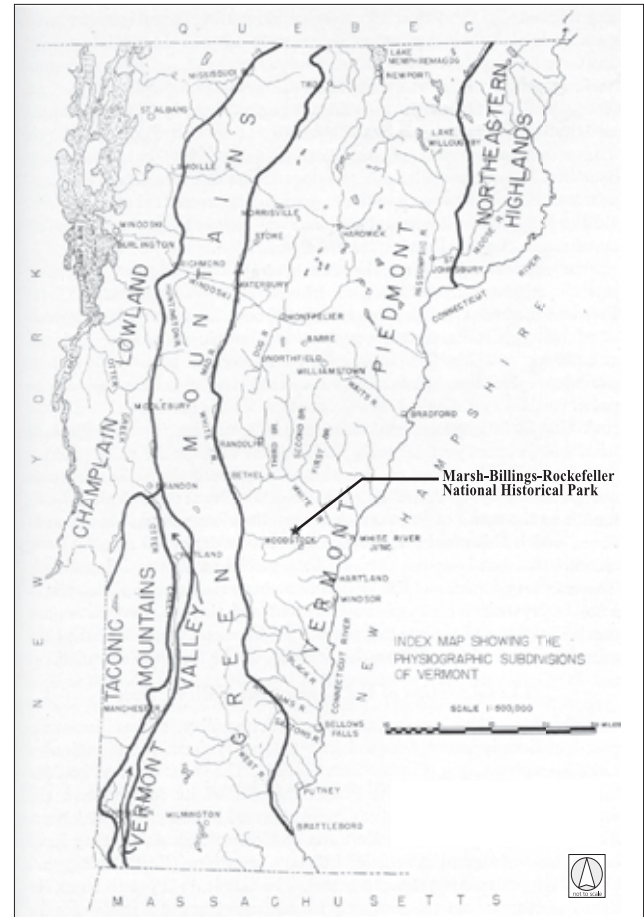


Figure 1.1: Physiographic subdivisions of Vermont. Reproduced from David Stewart, *The Glacial Geology of Vermont* (Montpelier, 1961), 45.

Mountain, one of the tallest peaks in the adjoining Green Mountains about twenty miles west of Woodstock, is today recorded at 4,234 feet, an adjustment over earlier calculations. [Figure 1.2]

### GEOLOGIC HISTORY

The gentle hills and valleys that characterize much of the Vermont Piedmont are the end product of a very long geologic history during which the underlying bedrock was formed. At the Mansion grounds, bedrock lies close to the surface and in places is visible as rock outcroppings. Fragments of the bedrock, which were gathered and mined from Mount Tom and the surrounding area, are found throughout the landscape as stone walls, steps, and garden edging. The bedrock of the Vermont Piedmont was formed



Figure 1.2: Relative topography in Vermont, with elevations as recorded in 1842. Zadock Thompson, *History of Vermont, Natural, Civil, and Statistical* (Burlington, 1842), 3. The elevation of Mount Tom to the west of the Mansion grounds is approximately 1,340 feet.

originally from lava flows and sediments laid down beneath ancient seas; later, these rocks were subjected to heat and pressure and metamorphosed at depth in the earth's crust. The bedrock ranges in age from Cambrian to Devonian (545–362 million years ago), and has a stratigraphic thickness of over 20,000 feet.<sup>2</sup> Movement and collision of the tectonic plates during several events in the Paleozoic (545–200 million years ago) resulted in intense folding and faulting, and uplift of the stratified bedrock into mountains that were probably much higher than today. Over millions of years, through the forces of erosion (mainly water and ice) the mountains were worn down to form today's topography.<sup>3</sup>

Beneath the Mansion grounds are two different bedrock formations, with the contact between them running near the west side of the Mansion in a roughly north-south line.

[Figure 1.3] To the east of this line, the bedrock is described as the “Standing Pond volcanics,” a narrow rock unit formed from basalt that probably represents eruptions from volcanoes on an ancient sea floor. In this formation are primarily dark-colored rocks identified as hornblende schist, amphibolite, and hornblende gabbro (characterized by radiating elongate crystals), with occurrences of garnet crystals two inches or more in diameter. To the west of the contact line and extending over a large area to the west is bedrock identified as the “Waits River formation.” This is metamorphosed rock of largely sedimentary origin, deposited beneath Devonian seas. At the Mansion grounds near the

contact line with the Standing Pond volcanics bedrock, the Waits River formation is characterized as primarily black, quartz-bearing phyllite with large garnet crystals imbedded with small amounts of impure limestone.<sup>4</sup>

Over millions of years, the plateau of the Vermont Piedmont region was eroded into hills and valleys by streams and rivers, and most recently through the powerful action of continental glaciers during the Pleistocene epoch (better known as the Ice Age) that ended roughly 12,500 years ago.<sup>5</sup> These continental glaciers, known as the Laurentide ice sheet, gave the landscape much of its present topographic character. Up to one mile deep, the ice sheet was of such great weight and force that it depressed the earth, ground down mountains into rounded hills, and broadened valleys. As the glacier melted and retreated to the north, it left behind debris formerly bound in the ice, primarily glacial till composed of pebbles, clay, sand, and silt, but also large scattered boulders known as glacial erratics—a prominent one is on the Mansion lawn.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to glaciers, the geology of the Mansion grounds has been shaped by the on-going force of water erosion, transport, and deposition. Streams and rivers have eroded glacial till to expose bedrock in places, while also depositing cobbles and other sediment from till farther upstream. The Ottauquechee River has been the most powerful source of such processes and has created a floodplain (flat land adjacent to a river), which is (or has been) subject to periodic flooding. The changing volume and course of the river

over thousands of years has eroded adjoining banks of glacial till and glacial lake-bottom sediments, and has created features known as terraces, which record successive floodplain levels. The Mansion is on what is probably the uppermost floodplain terrace, with Elm Street following the terrace edge.

On the boundary between the floodplain and adjoining uplands, the native soils of the Mansion grounds are characterized by two types. On the hill west of the Mansion are the Vershire and Vershire-Dummerston complex series derived from the glacial till. These soils tend to be thin, coarse, loamy, and slightly acidic. Being the uppermost floodplain terrace, the native soils along the Mansion terrace bordering Elm Street consist of the Windsor series derived from sandy glacial outwash. These soils tend to be very deep, excessively drained, and acidic.<sup>7</sup>

### THE PRIMEVAL FOREST

The glacier that shaped the topography and set down much of the soils of the Vermont Piedmont scraped away virtually all forms of life from the region for thousands of years. As the glacier finally retreated, the climate warmed and seeds and nuts were carried in from the south by wind and animals; the forests that had been forced south began slowly to return. By about 10,000 years ago, a beech-maple

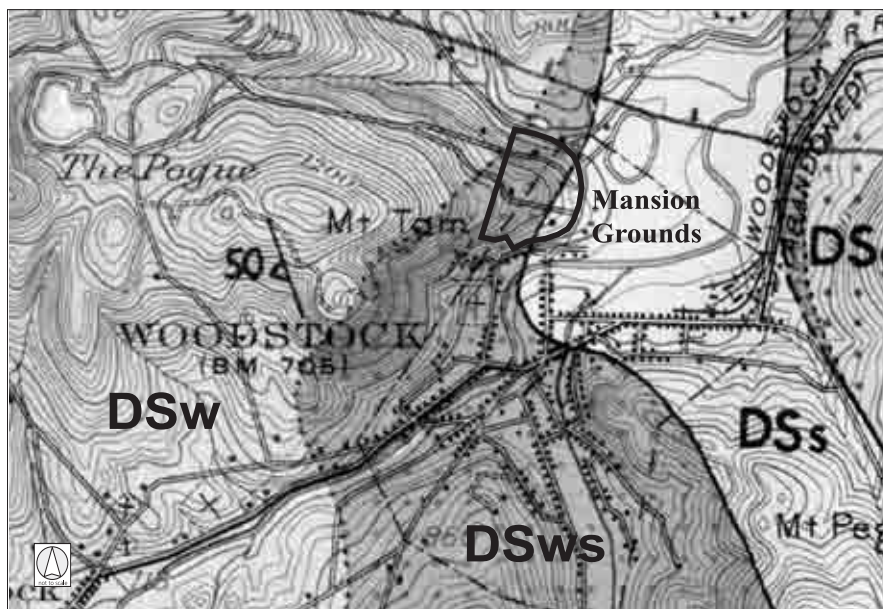


Figure 1.3: Bedrock formations in the vicinity of the Mansion grounds. Detail, P.H. Chang et al., "Geologic Map and Structure Sections of the Woodstock Quadrangle, Vermont (Montpelier: Vermont Geological Survey, c.1965), annotated by SUNY ESF. "DSs" designates Standing Pond volcanics; "DSws" and "DSw" designate the Waits River formation.

forest had taken hold on mid-elevation, cool, moist regions such as that found around Woodstock.<sup>8</sup> This forest was dominated by sugar maple and beech, with lesser numbers of basswood, American elm, white ash, yellow birch, Eastern hop-hornbeam, red maple, and hemlock. A drought and a warm period in the Vermont Piedmont about 6,000 years ago allowed an oak-chestnut forest to take over, a forest that is today (minus the chestnuts) more typical of southern New England and the Hudson Valley. With the return of colder conditions roughly 4,500 years ago, the beech-maple forest regained dominance, although remnant oak-chestnut stands often survived on warmer, well-drained acidic sites, such as on the hillside to the west of the Mansion. White pine stands were also common in the region on well-drained glacial and alluvial soils, such as on the Ottauquechee River floodplain.<sup>9</sup> As recorded in the late nineteenth century, early European settlers found such mixed forest conditions in Woodstock:

*Wherever the eye turned to survey the prospect, there appeared an unbroken forest, stretching far and wide till it was lost in the distance. Every valley*



Figure 1.4: Common Vermont trees, as identified in the mid nineteenth century. Zadock Thompson, *History of Vermont* (Burlington: Published for the author by C. Goodrich, 1842), 209-216, compiled by SUNY ESF.

*was filled, and every hill and mountain covered to the top with a dense growth of trees, made up chiefly of maple and beech, sprinkled with evergreen and a few oaks...At the foot of Mount Tom was a swamp grown up chiefly with evergreen, but the white pine, a comparatively scarce tree in this part of the valley, grew with remarkable luxuriance on the lowlands at the confluence of North Branch [Barnard Brook] and Quechee River.<sup>10</sup>*

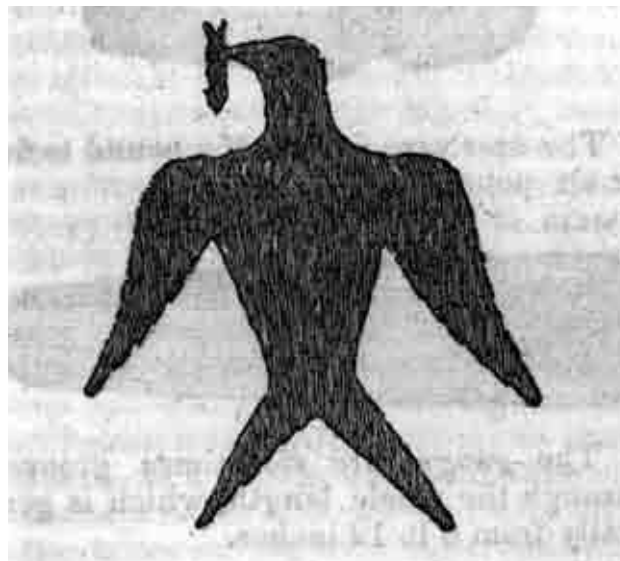
The primeval forest was probably quite similar in overall character to contemporary forests that have regenerated within the past century. Sugar maples and beeches, for example, commonly grew to heights of between 90 and 120 feet, but the diameters of their trunks were rarely more than three feet, not much bigger than many of the old roadside and pasture trees that exist today.<sup>11</sup> Depending on local conditions, the primeval forest probably contained taller trees, a greater percentage of beech, and perhaps half as many maples.<sup>12</sup> The understory may also have been higher, with less undergrowth on the shady forest floor. Despite the vast depletion of the primeval forest that took place with widespread European settlement in the late

eighteenth and early 19th centuries, most tree species persisted and remained common features in the landscape. [Figure 1.4]

### THE WESTERN ABENAKI AT THE EASTERN FOOT OF MOUNT TOM

Vermont was home to Woodland peoples who were part of human culture in the region dating back between 11,000 and 2,900 years ago. On the eve of European contact at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Woodland peoples who inhabited much of present-day Vermont, New Hampshire and adjoining southern Quebec were the Western Abenaki, “Abenaki meaning” “People of the Dawnland.” The Western Abenaki lived according to the natural cycles of the land, and indeed their overall small population and subsistence agriculture indicates that their impact on the natural environment was minimal, especially compared with that of later European settlement. In the early seventeenth century, the total Western Abenaki population is estimated to have been between 5,000 and 10,000. As with most Native American societies, the natural environment held strong cultural values. Prominent landforms, rivers, certain trees, animals, and other life forms, as well as

Figure 1.5: Nineteenth-century lithograph of an Abenaki petroglyph found in the West River at Brattleboro. Zadock Thompson, *History of Vermont Natural, Civil, and Statistical* (Burlington: Published for the author by C. Goodrich, 1842), 208.



the entire homeland, were often spiritually revered. In the nineteenth century, historians recorded Abenaki petroglyphs of the native flora and fauna that reflected the culture's value of the natural world. [Figure 1.5]

The Western Abenaki called their homeland *Ndakinna* meaning “our land.”<sup>13</sup> The land was organized into territories belonging to five bands—the Missisquois, Pigwackett, Pennacooks, Sokokis, and Cowasucks—whose individual homelands occupied distinct geographic regions, each with a principal year-round village. [Figure 1.6] At the time of European contact in the seventeenth century, the Woodstock area was probably within the Cowasuck homeland. The principal Cowasuck village was Cowass, located near the present-day village of Newbury, Vermont, on the Connecticut River.<sup>14</sup>

During the warmer seasons, families left the principal village for their own hunting territories, established according to the limits of watersheds, where they maintained small seasonal camps.<sup>15</sup> Little is known about the appearance of these seasonal camps, except that they were usually established on high ground close to rivers, and had agricultural fields on adjoining floodplains.<sup>16</sup> In these fields, the Western Abenaki may have grown crops such as corn, beans, squash, and tobacco. Agriculture was limited by the short growing season, so that hunting, fishing, and gathering remained important mainstays. Passenger pigeons, deer, bears, moose, muskrat, beaver, and otter, along with eel, salmon, and trout were important staples. Some of the Western Abenakis' favorite foods gathered from the forests included maple and birch sap, spring greens, blueberries, butternuts, and chestnuts.<sup>17</sup>

The first Europeans to settle at the eastern foot of Mount Tom in the 1770s encountered what was probably evidence of Native American habitation. Historian Henry Swan Dana, in his 1889 *History of Woodstock*, wrote that settlers found a clearing in the woods on the floodplain east of the Mansion grounds near the present location of the barns at Billings Farm & Museum. According to Dana, this clearing had been “occupied some time in the history of this valley as an Indian camping ground.” The exact location and size of the clearing was not recorded, and apparently the

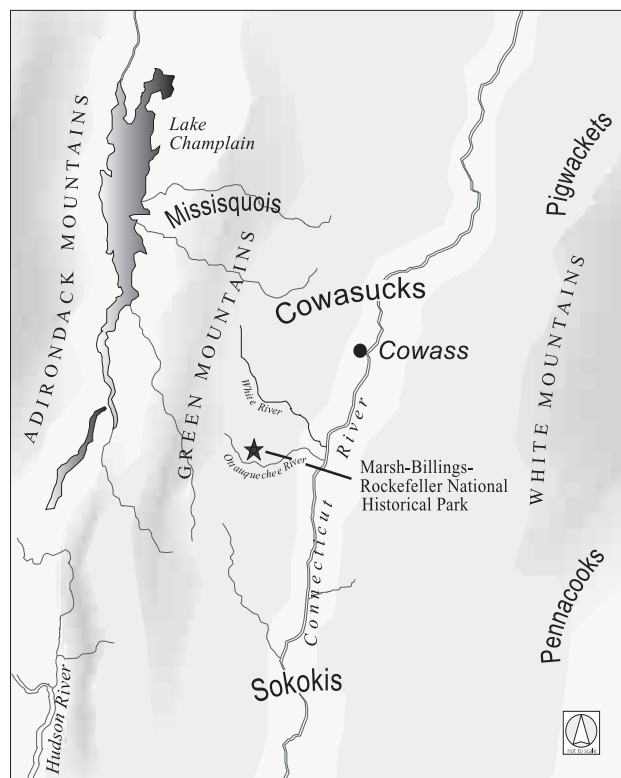


Figure 1.6: *Ndakinna*, the Western Abenaki homeland, showing general location of major bands about 1600. Based on map in Colin Calloway, *The Western Abenakis of Vermont* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 4-5. SUNY ESF.

Europeans found no other traces of habitation, as by that time the camp may have been long abandoned.<sup>18</sup> The Western Abenaki population had been decimated by this time due to many factors, including European diseases and cultural influences. Already by the mid seventeenth century, the population had fallen from a pre-contact level of about 10,000 to a few hundred, a decline of more than ninety percent by best estimates.<sup>19</sup>

Given that the Western Abenaki had practiced agriculture for centuries prior to the arrival of the Europeans, the clearing observed by European settlers may have been a fallow agricultural field that was part of a Cowasuck family's seasonal camp. This location would have provided such desirable attributes as ready access to water, including the Ottauquechee River, its tributary Barnard Brook (then known as the North Branch of the Ottauquechee River), and springs on Mount Tom; elevated terraces to provide safety from floods; and southern and eastern exposure for



warmth and protection from prevailing winds.<sup>20</sup> The location was near the middle of the Ottauquechee River watershed, which would have defined the family’s hunting territory, and through which the river would have been the main route. [Figure 1.7] The name Ottauquechee is derived from the Abenaki word “Quechee,” meaning “swift mountain stream.”<sup>21</sup>

Another natural attribute that may have made this location attractive to the Cowasuck in particular was the existence of a mature white pine forest. As indicated by Cowasuck place names, the white pine was revered. “Cowasuck” means “People of the Pines,” a reflection of their white-pine-rich Connecticut River Valley homeland, and the name of their main village—“Cowass”—signified “at the place of the white pines.”<sup>22</sup> The white-pine forest European settlers encountered near the clearing on the Ottauquechee intervale was on the lowlands at the confluence of the Barnard Brook.<sup>23</sup> Other features of the land,

**Figure 1.7: Map of the Ottauquechee River floodplain and eastern foot of Mount Tom illustrating topography, natural features, and clearing extant prior to European settlement, c.1765 relative to the later location of the Mansion grounds. Text in italics and dashed lines indicate approximate locations of features described in Henry Swan Dana, *The History of Woodstock* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1889). SUNY ESF.**



such as Mount Tom with its relatively high elevation, prominent overlook, mountain-top bog (the Pogue), and distinctive set of peaks may also have held spiritual value. [Figure 1.8]

### EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT AT THE EASTERN FOOT OF MOUNT TOM

The earliest European settlers in Vermont concentrated in the Connecticut River Valley, southeastern Vermont, and portions of the Champlain Valley. Their claims to the land went largely unchallenged given the tiny Western Abenaki population in the eighteenth century. The eastern half of Vermont along the Connecticut River was claimed by New Hampshire, which in the early 1760s established 112 new towns known as the “New Hampshire Grants.” One of these towns was Woodstock, chartered in 1761 and granted to a group of proprietors, who were potential settlers but more than likely wealthy land speculators.<sup>24</sup> The most aggressive of the land speculators in Woodstock was Oliver Willard, originally from Massachusetts. By 1772, he had secured title to nearly the entire town, including the eastern foot of Mount Tom, encompassing the Mansion grounds.<sup>25</sup>

The population of Vermont remained small prior to the Revolution despite the activity of proprietors and land speculators. In 1763, it is estimated that there were about three hundred people living in Vermont; by 1775, the population had jumped to about sixteen thousand.<sup>26</sup> The first permanent settlers in Woodstock came in 1768 and purchased land from Oliver Willard. A few more families followed the next year, and by 1772, there was sufficient settlement to organize a town government.<sup>27</sup> In the 1780s, following the end of the Revolution, there was a great influx of settlers



Figure 1.8: Mount Tom, an enduring part of the natural setting of the Mansion grounds, looking east across the Ottauquechee River. Detail of an 1860s photograph, Woodstock Historical Society.

into Woodstock, reflecting the increase in the overall population of Vermont, which reached 85,341 in 1791, the year it gained statehood.<sup>28</sup>

This influx of settlers had profound impacts on the natural environment, the most significant of which was the clearing of the forests for farms, which developed in a spread-out pattern. Apart from constraints of the natural topography, the early pattern of European settlement in Vermont was determined by the proprietary system. As practiced in the earliest New England settlements, the proprietary system required that common fields and village lots be established. This resulted in a pattern of development similar to the rural English homeland, where everyone lived in compact villages and went out to work in the surrounding fields. By the time Vermont was settled, however, the proprietary system as usually practiced did not involve such requirements. The land was instead generally sold to individual settlers, who lived on their land within individual farmsteads, usually about fifty to one hundred acres in size. This led to a dominant rural pattern of settlement.<sup>29</sup> The Mansion grounds were initially settled in this manner as an individual farmstead apart from the village, which developed on the south side of the Ottauquechee River and was known initially as the “Green.”

As their Western Abenaki predecessors probably had done, European settlers found the area around the Mansion grounds at the eastern foot of Mount Tom to be a prime spot for settlement. With its good agricultural soils on the Ottauquechee River intervale and elevated terraces, this area was some of the earliest land to be settled in Woodstock following

arrival of the first European settlers in the late 1760s. Record of this settlement, however, remains largely from oral tradition, which was apparently the source for most settlement—era accounts in Henry Swan Dana’s *The History of Woodstock*, published in 1889.<sup>30</sup>

Dana wrote that the earliest inhabitant of the area near the Mansion grounds was a Mr. Perkins, probably John Perkins, a squatter on property owned by land speculator Oliver Willard. Perkins built a log hut in c.1769 on or near the present location of the Billings Farm & Museum barns, perhaps adjoining the old Western Abenaki clearing.<sup>31</sup> [Figure 1.9] By 1776, John Smith Hoisington had purchased from Willard a large two-hundred-acre parcel on the Ottauquechee River intervale that included part or all of the Mansion grounds. Dana recorded that Hoisington cleared the forest on the intervale in c.1776, apparently expanding the pre-existing Abenaki clearing. Hoisington did not build his house on this land, but rather on the south side of the river, on another two hundred acres that he owned near the location of the village green. The only known improvement on the intervale during this time, aside from the Perkins log hut, was a “pent road” (deadend road), which the town voted to open in 1781 to provide access to John Strong’s mill, located on Barnard Brook near its confluence with the Ottauquechee River. This road led from the village on the south side of the river, crossed the river (perhaps via a ford or log bridge), and then extended across the intervale to reach John Strong’s mill.<sup>32</sup> [Figure 1.9]

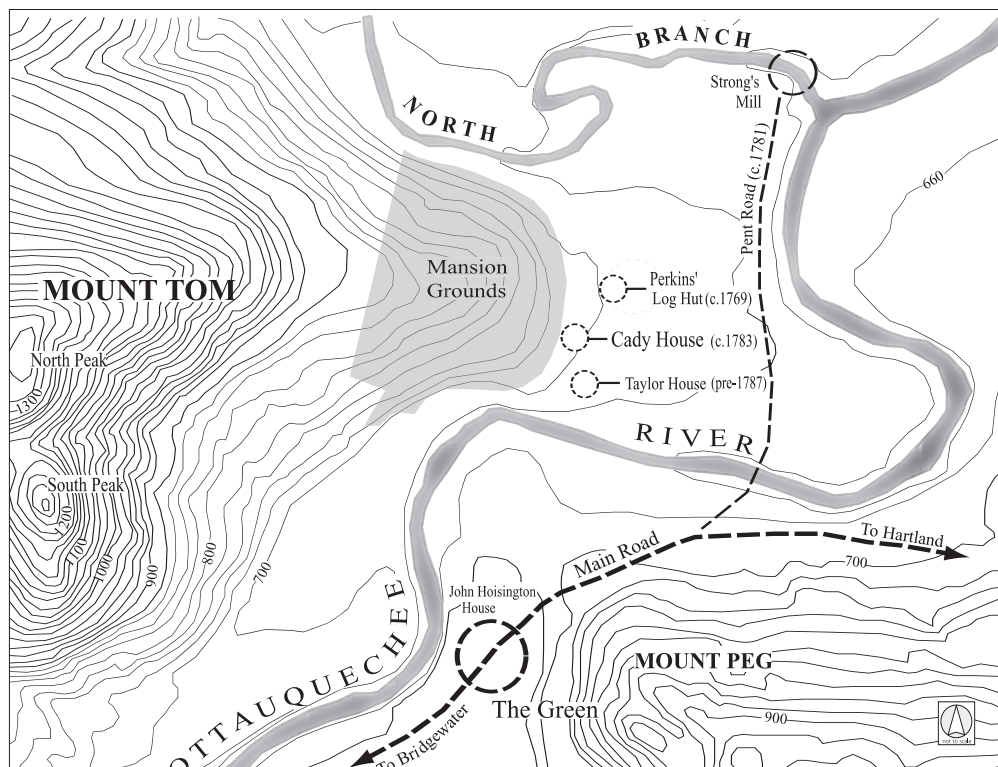


Figure 1.9: Map showing the Mansion grounds and surrounding area at the time of early European settlement, c.1789. Italics and dashed lines indicate approximate location of features, as described in Henry Swan Dana's *The History of Woodstock* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1889). SUNY ESF.

Following the Revolution, John Hoisington sold much of his property. In a deed dated May 28, 1782, he sold 140 acres of his intervalle property to Charles Kilham for £480. Charles Kilham (also spelled Killam) was an extensive landholder in the town and, according to historian Dana, an “enterprising man.” Kilham probably acquired the land from Hoisington for speculation, which might explain his quick sale of a fifty-acre part of the property for £130 to James Cady on March 20, 1783. Cady was a wheelwright, but as with most early settlers, was also a farmer. The limits of his fifty-acre parcel cannot be determined from existing deeds, but the property included at least the eastern part of the Mansion grounds, including the location of the first Marsh house sited on the existing tennis court.<sup>33</sup> To Cady's north was the remainder of John Hoisington's farm, and to the south bordering the Ottauquechee River was Robert D. Taylor's farm of ten acres, which included a house near a narrow part of the river.<sup>34</sup> [Figure 1.9]

James Cady's fifty-acre farm contained at least two structures. When he acquired the property in 1783, he may have lived in the Perkins log hut, but soon was forced because of flooding to rebuild on a higher terrace.<sup>35</sup> Cady chose a location corresponding with the existing western end of the intervalle, near Elm Street and across from where the Mansion would be built. About this second house, historian Dana recorded:

On the brink of the upper terrace of the high meadow, directly in front of Mr. Billings's mansion on the hill, once stood a house, esteemed among the first erected in this neighborhood. The cellar and other relics of this house were to be traced till within a few years.<sup>36</sup> [Figure 1.9]

Although Dana did not identify the builder and occupant of this house, it must have been James Cady, since he was the first owner of this property as an individual farm.<sup>37</sup> Cady's house overlooked the broad meadow on the intervalle that had first been cleared by John Smith Hoisington in the 1770s. Cady's house had a stone foundation, but was probably still built of logs, since more refined frame houses typically were built only after local sawmills were established, which began to occur in Vermont in the 1790s. Cady's house may have featured refinements over the earlier log hut such as windows and a chimney, as well as an adjoining barn.<sup>38</sup>

Throughout the seven years that he owned the fifty-acre farm, James Cady probably continued to clear the forest for crops and pasture, expanding the intervalle meadow toward the higher ground to the west. The forest provided building parts for his house, as well as wood and potash. The fertile portion of his land on the intervalle would have

been suitable for growing wheat, rye, corn, oats, peas, and beans—crops commonly grown by Vermont settlers.<sup>39</sup> On his rougher terrain at the foot of Mount Tom, corresponding with the Mansion grounds, Cady may have used the land in part as pasture.<sup>40</sup>

## LANDSCAPE SUMMARY

Prior to European settlement in the eighteenth century, the Mansion grounds and the surrounding floodplain at the eastern foot of Mount Tom were part of a vast northern hardwoods forest that may have been occupied by the Western Abenaki as a seasonal camp. According to oral tradition recorded in the late nineteenth century, John Perkins was the first European to settle near the Mansion grounds in c.1769. He built a log hut located east of the Mansion grounds in the general location of the Upper Barns at Billings Farm & Museum. By 1776, John Hoisington had acquired two hundred acres in the Ottauquechee intervale, and in 1782, sold part of this property, including all or part of the Mansion grounds, to Charles Kilham. The next year, Kilham in turn sold fifty of these acres, again including all or part of the Mansion grounds, to James Cady. It was Cady who built a house directly east of the Mansion in c.1783, replacing the earlier Perkins log hut. From its elevated position on an intervale terrace, the Cady house probably looked out across an open meadow that extended across the intervale to the river. To the west or rear of the house rose Mount Tom, which remained forested, and to the south across the Ottauquechee River was the young village of Woodstock. In 1789, James Cady sold his fifty-acre farm to Charles Marsh, and moved to Royalton, north of Woodstock.<sup>41</sup> Over the next two decades, Charles Marsh was to transform the property into one of the most prominent places in Woodstock.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> W. J. Latmer et al., *Soil Survey (Reconnaissance) of Vermont* (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Department of Agriculture, 1930), 2; David Stewart, *The Glacial Geology of*

*Vermont* (Montpelier: Vermont Geological Survey Bulletin No. 19, 1961), 45.

<sup>2</sup> Ping Hsi Chang, et al., *Bedrock Geology of the Woodstock Quadrangle, Vermont* (Montpelier: Vermont Geological Survey, Bulletin No. 29, 1965), 13.

<sup>3</sup> The general geological reference for this section is: R. D. Hatcher, W. A. Thomas, and G. W. Viele, "The Appalachian-Ouchita Orogen in the United States," in *Decade of North American Geology* (Geological Society of America, 1989), Volume F-2.

<sup>4</sup> Chang, 38-41.

<sup>5</sup> Christopher McGrory Klyza and Stephen C. Trombulak, *The Story of Vermont: A Natural and Cultural History* (Hanover, N.H.: Published for Middlebury College Press by University Press of New England, 1999), 17-18.

<sup>6</sup> David P. Stewart, *The Glacial Geology of Vermont* (Montpelier: Vermont Geological Survey, Bulletin No. 19, 1961), 68.

<sup>7</sup> David P. Stewart et al., "Original Surficial Mapping," Woodstock 15 Minute Quadrangle (Montpelier: Vermont Geological Survey, mapping completed 1956-1966).

<sup>8</sup> Thomas M. Bonnicksen, *America's Ancient Forests From the Ice Age to the Age of Discovery* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2000), 32.

<sup>9</sup> New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, *Ecological Communities of New York State* (Latham, N.Y.: Published by the Department, no date), 57-59; Albers, 42-43; Zadeck Thompson, *History of Vermont, Natural Civil, and Statistical* (Burlington: Published for the author by C. Goodrich, 1842), 209-218; Bonnicksen, 270.

<sup>10</sup> Henry Swan Dana, *The History of Woodstock, Vermont 1761-1886*, Rev. ed. with an Introduction and Epilogue by Peter S. Jennison (Taftsville: Published for the Woodstock Foundation by the Countryman Press, 1980), 13-14.

<sup>11</sup> Bonnicksen, 280.

<sup>12</sup> Albers, 44.

<sup>13</sup> Calloway, 6, 14.

<sup>14</sup> Calloway, 8-9, 12.

<sup>15</sup> Calloway, 10; Day, 210.

<sup>16</sup> Albers, 58; based on work of William Haviland and Marjory Power, *The Original Vermonters* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1994); Gordon Day, "Western Abenaki." In Michael K. Foster and William

Cowan, editors, *In Search of New England's Native Past: Selected Essays by Gordon M. Day* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 204, 212.

<sup>17</sup> Day, 212.

<sup>18</sup>Historian Henry Swan Dana recorded in the 1880s that early settlers in Woodstock feared the "red man," but in actuality, the Ottauquechee Valley "continued free at all times from the inroads of the savages." Dana, 14.

<sup>19</sup> Calloway, 39.

<sup>20</sup> Giovanna Peebles, Vermont State Archeologist, interview by John Auwaerter, 18 January 2001, telephone. Ms. Peebles considers the Mansion grounds to have a "moderate-to-high sensitivity," meaning that it is likely that prehistoric (pre-European Native American) archeological resources exist on the property.

<sup>21</sup> Albers, 61.

<sup>22</sup> Calloway, 8-10.

<sup>23</sup> Dana, 14. Documentation of the Abenakis' spiritual association with the natural environment near the Mansion grounds has never been documented.

<sup>24</sup> Three years later in 1764, King George issued an order to settle the dispute over Vermont, and gave all of the land west of the Connecticut River to New York, including the New Hampshire Grants. New York then declared all of the New Hampshire grants to be void, and set up counties and new grants called patents. Woodstock was rechartered by New York in 1767 to a group of proprietors that may have included some of the original ones from the New Hampshire grants. Klyza and Trombulak, 53; Dana, 3.

<sup>25</sup> Dana, 5-8.

<sup>26</sup> Klyza and Trombulak, 55.

<sup>27</sup> Dana, 19, 26.

<sup>28</sup> Klyza and Trombulak, 61.

<sup>29</sup> Albers, 86.

<sup>30</sup> It is difficult to assess the accuracy of Dana's accounts, several of which seem to overlap in reference to location and time. The earliest deeds in Woodstock are also difficult to assess because they do not include maps, and reference landmarks that no longer survive.

<sup>31</sup> Dana, 191-92. Dana first writes that Mr. Perkins lived in a log hut "a few rods east of the spot where stood the first house built by Mr. Marsh." He subsequently writes: "On the brow of the meadow, where stood in 1868 Mr.

Marsh's lower barn [present Upper Barns of Billings Farm & Museum], was a log cabin partly in ruins when Mr. Marsh came to Woodstock to live. This is supposed to have been the house in which James Cady lived. . . ." Both of these descriptions correspond to the same location; although Dana does not make the connection, this house was probably the Perkins log hut, which Cady may have lived in prior to building a new house located across Elm Street from the Mansion.

<sup>32</sup> Dana, 14, 18, 191-92. The exact alignment of this road is not known.

<sup>33</sup> Dana, 82, 193; Woodstock Town Land Records (deeds), vol. 1, page 98: John Hoisington to Charles Kilham, 28 May 1782 (recorded in index as 25 October 1781); vol. 1, page 135-36: Charles Kilham (Killam) to James Cady, 20 March 1783. In this deed, the fifty-acre property sold to Cady is described as follows: "A certain piece of parcel of land laying and Being in the North-East corner of Woodstock bounded as follows: Beginning at the North East West corner of the lott Number one-hundred and Seventy four from thence North twenty Eight Degrees East to John Smith Hoisingtons South East corner thence North Seventy one Degrees West Nineteen chains and fifty links to a Stake: thence South five chains: thence North Sixty five Degrees West forty three twenty three Chains and twenty five links to a Stake in Benjamin Burch his East line thence South twenty-Eight Degrees west to the South west corner of Said lott thence South Sixty five Degrees East to the first mentioned Bounds containing fifty Acres be the same more or less Reference to be - had to said Bounds with Usual Allowense for Highways Excepted."

<sup>34</sup> Dana, 192.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* Dana writes, "On the brow of the meadow, where stood in 1868 Mr. Marsh's lower barn [present Upper Barns] was a log cabin partly in ruins when Mr. Marsh came to Woodstock to live. This is supposed to have been the house in which James Cady lived. . . ." This was probably the Perkins log hut in which Cady initially lived, prior to building a new house farther south.

<sup>36</sup> Dana, 191. The location of this house was on the east side of Elm Street rather than in the lawn in front of the Mansion. "Traces" of the foundation would not have been visible in the lawn by the time Dana wrote his book, given

the significant grading Frederick Billings undertook to establish his lawn beginning in c.1869.

<sup>37</sup> Working back from 1789, when Charles Marsh purchased Cady's fifty-acre farm and built a new house on the adjoining terrace (present site of the tennis court), James Cady is the only possible builder of the house Dana describes because the previous owner, Charles Kilham, was probably a land speculator and owned the land for less than one year. Prior to Kilham, the property was owned by John Smith Hoisington, who did not need a house on the property because his house was on the south side of the river.

<sup>38</sup> Dana, 192; Albers, 102-05.

<sup>39</sup> Albers, 107-08.

<sup>40</sup> As late as 1797, the land now occupied by the Belvedere and Terrace Gardens remained forested. Dana, 553.

<sup>41</sup> Dana, 192.



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## II. THE MARSH PLACE, 1789–1869

Following the Revolution, the Ottauquechee River valley was transformed by a rush of settlers, who cleared the forests for farms, built roads, and established villages. Charles Marsh was one of these new settlers; he arrived in Woodstock in 1788 after finishing law school. When he looked around Woodstock for a place to settle that would allow him to farm and have ready access to the village where he could practice law, his attention would have been quickly attracted to James Cady's fifty-acre farm. It had fertile acres, proximity to the village, and elevated land looking out over the broad intervale. In January 1789, Marsh purchased Cady's farm and over the next several decades transformed it into a prosperous farm and refined country seat, known locally as the Marsh Place or Marsh Hill.<sup>1</sup> Here, the conservationist George Perkins Marsh was to grow up and gain his earliest experience with nature and landscape. It was not George, however, but rather his younger brother Charles who would inherit the place from his father and maintain it until shortly after the Civil War.

### THE CHARLES MARSH FAMILY

Charles Marsh was born in Lebanon, Connecticut, in 1765, the eighth of Joseph and Dorothy Mason Marsh's twelve children. Like many southern New Englanders at the time, the Marsh family moved to the frontier of Vermont, and in 1773 settled in Hartford, a Connecticut River Valley town about seven miles east of Woodstock.<sup>2</sup> Charles Marsh graduated from Dartmouth College in nearby Hanover, New Hampshire, and completed law studies in 1788. Soon after, he moved to Woodstock with his new wife, Nancy Collins and opened the first law practice in the young village while also developing his farm. When Woodstock became the new Windsor County seat in 1790, he headed up the construction of the courthouse, where his portrait would later hang [Figure 2.1]. Marsh quickly became a dominant figure in the county court, and later held several high political offices, including federal district attorney and Representative in Congress. While publicly respected, he was apparently feared for his sternness and hot temper. He remained a strong adherent to his Calvinist faith and carried his strict views into all matters of his public and family life.<sup>3</sup>



Figure 2.1: Engraving of a portrait of Charles Marsh (Senior) by Benjamin Franklin Mason, c.1846. The portrait hangs in the Windsor County Courthouse, Woodstock.

In 1790, Charles and Nancy Marsh had their first child, Charles, followed in 1793 by a daughter, Ann Collins. Tragedy fell on the family when Nancy died after Ann's birth, leaving Charles a widower for the next five years. During this time, Charles met Susan Perkins, who was soon to be engaged to Josias Lyndon Arnold, a lawyer and poet. Within the Arnolds' first year of marriage, Josias died. Susan soon became reacquainted with Charles Marsh and they married in 1798. Over the course of twenty-two years, the couple had five children: Lyndon Arnold in 1799, George Perkins in 1801, Joseph in 1807, Sarah Burrill in 1809, and Charles (Junior) in 1821. The older Charles, son from the first marriage, died in 1817.<sup>4</sup>

With a respected legal profession and strong real estate and philanthropic business in the village, Charles Marsh quickly rose in prominence and wealth. He was a strict



parent and fostered hard work, making education a priority in raising his children. Ann Collins, the eldest living child of the family, married John Burnell, a medical doctor in Woodstock. Lyndon Arnold, the next oldest, followed his father into the law profession in Woodstock; George Perkins became a renowned statesman and conservationist; Joseph studied medicine and was a professor at the University of Vermont in Burlington; and Sarah Burrill married Wyllys Lyman, a lawyer in Hartford, Vermont. Charles, the youngest child, did not take up a profession, but rather stayed on at the family farm, which he inherited in 1847.<sup>5</sup> The junior Charles never married and earned his living by farming and by selling off parts of the property. In 1869, he sold the farm to Frederick Billings. Of this Charles, historian Henry Swan Dana wrote, “Not inferior to any of his brothers in intellectual abilities, though less cultivated therein, he possessed and exercised equally with them, all through life, a strict integrity, and a moral character pure from all stain.”<sup>6</sup>

### GEORGE PERKINS MARSH AND CONSERVATION

George Perkins Marsh developed a strong interest in nature as a young boy growing up on his family’s Woodstock farm. When not studying (he was a precocious boy, entering Dartmouth College at age fifteen), he roamed the pastures, woods, and hills that surrounded his home, including Mount Tom with its panoramic views across the surrounding countryside. For Charles Marsh, this countryside was a laboratory for teaching George the science of nature, such as the variety of trees, the topography of the hills, and the manner in which water flowed.<sup>7</sup> George’s mother Susan may have also played a significant role in fostering her son’s interest in the natural world, although she probably introduced him to the romantic

side rather than the scientific.<sup>8</sup> Her first husband, Josias Arnold, wrote poems about nature and the landscape of his home in the upper Connecticut River valley of Vermont. Upon his death, Susan appreciated his poetry enough to have a volume entitled *Poems / by the late Josias Lyndon Arnold, Esquire of St. Johnsbury* published in 1797.<sup>9</sup> Arnold’s poems showed a strong sensitivity toward nature and rural life. Many had a remarkably romantic quality, such as “Ode to Connecticut River,” in which Arnold praised the river not for utility, but where, “On thy lov’d banks, sweet river, free / From worldly care and vanity, / I could my every hour confine / And think true happiness was mine . . .”<sup>10</sup> [Full poem in Appendix A] George Perkins Marsh must have been intimately familiar with Arnold’s poems, which may have led to his own romantic view of nature as a child. Later in life, Marsh remembered that “the bubbling brook, the trees, the flowers, the wild animals were to me persons, not things.”<sup>11</sup>

With his scientific understanding and romantic appreciation of nature, young George Perkins Marsh had an unusually broad perspective on the natural world for an early nineteenth century New Englander. This was a time when nature and wilderness still lingered both as a physical

Figure 2.2: Photograph of Central Street in Woodstock looking south with the bare and eroded slopes of Mount Peg in the background, 1867. Woodstock Historical Society.



reality and psychological presence, especially in recently settled areas such as Vermont. Nature, at least in its wild state, was to be conquered and exploited rather than revered or conserved. It was a common belief in Western society that nature existed for the benefit of mankind, and that mankind was called by God to subdue it.<sup>12</sup> And in a country such as the United States with its overabundance of natural resources, there was little pressing need to conserve those resources.

As the nineteenth century progressed, however, industrialization, specialized agriculture, and more efficient transportation often transformed the old fear of wilderness into disregard for nature except as a commodity to be exploited for profit. Although Vermont never witnessed extensive industrialization, the state's landscape was heavily impacted by specialized agriculture, which resulted in larger farms requiring extensive tracts of land. Together with mining and timber harvesting, specialized agriculture led to extensive logging, ultimately leading to removal of nearly two-thirds of the state's forest cover.<sup>13</sup> Mount Peg, rising behind Woodstock's fashionable brick business block, was completely cleared by the mid nineteenth century and displayed signs of serious erosion. [Figure 2.2]

Yet as the wilderness was disappearing, Americans began to recognize the aesthetic and spiritual value of nature, especially in the Northeast. It was in this region that the new industrial economy was generating great wealth, which for a small segment of society provided the means and leisure time to appreciate the natural world, albeit an idealized one. During the mid nineteenth century, Americans were awakening to the rural and picturesque qualities of their native lands, qualities that Europeans had long idealized in painting and landscape design. The Hudson River School of artists, for example, popularized nature through paintings of rugged and sublime landscapes, sometimes incorporating pastoral scenes of

idealized rural life. Frederick Billings would later acquire examples of their work. [Figure 2.3] In their landscapes, Americans began to manifest ideals of nature and countryside by establishing suburban and country estates designed with idealized rural and picturesque features such as sweeping lawns, winding drives, and rustic architecture, as evidenced in the work of Andrew Jackson Downing and later Frederick Law Olmsted.

For much of the nineteenth century, natural beauty was believed mainly to be the realm of artists and landscape



**Figure 2.3:** Asher B. Durand, "Autumn Landscape" (c.1847), a painting of the Hudson River School acquired by Frederick Billings. Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park.

gardeners. Few made the connection between landscapes ravaged by agriculture and logging, such as Woodstock's Mount Peg, and neighboring economic and social decline. By the middle decades of the nineteenth century, however, George Perkins Marsh was raising such concerns. Building on his romantic and scientific appreciation of nature learned as a child in Woodstock, his education and experiences taught him much about the subject. After graduating from Dartmouth College, Marsh taught for a short time, and then returned home to Woodstock for four years. He studied law and was admitted to the bar in 1825. He then moved from Woodstock to Burlington, Vermont,

which remained his home for the next thirty-five years. He was involved, often with little success, in real estate speculation, sheep farming, and in the lumber, railroad, and mining industries. He became a noted linguist, a Vermont and United States representative, Vermont Fish Commissioner, Ambassador to Italy, and helped found the Smithsonian Institution. His work allowed him to travel extensively overseas; he witnessed desert landscapes in the Mediterranean region that had once been lush and productive, but had been depleted, along with the surrounding communities, by exploitive agricultural practices not unlike those occurring in nineteenth-century America.

By the 1860s, George Perkins Marsh had fully developed and refined his philosophy about humankind's exploitive relationship with nature; in 1864 he published *Man and Nature, Or Physical Geography As Modified by Human Action*. In this seminal work, considered today to be the fountainhead of the American conservation movement, Marsh drew on examples of environmental degradation and associated social decline to warn of pending disaster for nature and human society:

*The earth is fast becoming an unfit home for its noblest inhabitant, and another era of equal human crime and human improvidence would reduce it to such a condition of impoverished productivity, of shattered surface, of climatic excess, as to threaten the depravation, barbarism, and perhaps even extinction of the species.*<sup>14</sup>

The conservation philosophy that Marsh employed in *Man and Nature* was not about preserving nature or wilderness, but rather about reversing wasteful exploitive practices such as in farming, timber harvesting, and mining. Marsh did not just criticize humankind's relationship with nature; he also provided solutions about how to improve that relationship. His work inspired the first generation of conservationists in America, including Frederick Billings, who practiced reforestation, soil conservation, and watershed management to enhance the sustainability and productivity of the land.<sup>15</sup>

Although as a child Marsh had remembered having a romantic view of nature, in *Man and Nature* he considered nature to be without its own purpose or morality.<sup>16</sup> Preservation of native ecosystems for their own sake or for the spiritual benefit of humankind, such as espoused by Thoreau and modern environmentalists, was not part of Marsh's conservation philosophy. Mining, gardening, farming, and building—practices Frederick Billings would undertake on and around the Mansion grounds—were appropriate to Marsh's conservation philosophy, if done wisely with the best science and social concern.

Despite the significance of his contributions to American conservation, there is little documentation that George Perkins Marsh's conservation philosophy had any direct impact on the landscape of the Mansion grounds and the Marsh Place as a whole. While Marsh lived most of his adult life away from Woodstock, he did correspond with his brother Charles, who owned and ran the family farm beginning in the late 1840s. Surviving correspondence between George and Charles concerns issues such as surveying, weather, and current events, but nothing directly related to conservation practices, such as stabilizing eroded banks, reforestation, or soil enhancement.<sup>17</sup> It seems unlikely, however, that the two never discussed conservation. Perhaps the reason much of Mount Tom was forested by the 1860s, unlike many of the surrounding hills, was due to George Perkins Marsh's advice.<sup>18</sup>

## **WOODSTOCK: AGRICULTURAL CENTER AND SHIRE TOWN**

The rural landscape surrounding Woodstock, as with much of Vermont, went through significant change over the eight decades that the Marsh family lived on the Mansion grounds, due in large part to an often unstable agricultural economy and generally inhospitable agricultural conditions. Vermont proved to be a difficult place to farm; the growing season was short and except in the most fertile valleys, the terrain was rough and the soils were poor.<sup>19</sup> The Marsh family was fortunate to have some of the best agricultural land in the region on the broad interval of the Ottauquechee River. Early on, agriculture was



generally practiced on a small scale, serving families and local markets. Individual farms, typically consisting of a tight arrangement of farmhouse, barn and other outbuildings, surrounded by pastures, fields, and woodlots, characterized the early rural landscape throughout the state.

With the advent of specialized agriculture during the first half of the nineteenth century, agriculture shifted from subsistence to commercial farming, where specialized crops were grown for sale in mass markets outside the region. With the introduction of canal and rail transportation beginning in the 1820s, commercial farming began to spread through the state. Vermont farmers soon found a lucrative market in the wool industry and sheep farms proliferated. By the 1850s, soon after the peak of the sheep craze, Windsor County had 190,868 sheep.<sup>20</sup> Vast areas once considered too steep or rocky for cultivation were converted to pasture and subject to overgrazing and erosion. Most of the hillsides surrounding Woodstock had been cleared as shown in an 1859 engraving.<sup>21</sup> [Figure 2.4] Improved transportation also exposed Vermont to more competitive farming regions with better soils and climates. By the 1850s, farmers in western states had gained control of the wool market, and the amount of sheep farming in Vermont fell precipitously. The introduction of dairy farming beginning in the 1840s provided farmers with an alternative to sheep farming, but the vast areas of overgrazed sheep pastures proved unable to support many farmers, and rural communities across the state began a slow but steady decline as farmers left for more productive

**Figure 2.4** View of Woodstock looking from the south peak of Mount Tom by Henry P. Moore, 1859, illustrating extent of forest clearing. Woodstock Historical Society. The Marsh Place is off the left side of the painting. [Viewshed 'A' in Figure 2.6]

lands in the West. Population figures for the Town of Woodstock reflect the initial spurt of settlement and establishment of farms, followed by a gradual drop. In 1791, the town had 1,605 inhabitants and the population quickly rose to 2,132 in 1800 and 2,672 in 1810. By 1840, at the height of the sheep craze, the population was 3,315, but by 1850 it had fallen to 3,041. In 1870, soon after the junior Charles Marsh sold the family farm, the population of the town had decreased to 2,910.<sup>22</sup>

### **VILLAGE AND COUNTRYSIDE: THE SETTING OF THE MARSH PLACE**

Over the course of a few decades following Charles Marsh's acquisition of the Cady farm in 1789, Woodstock village developed to the banks of the Ottauquechee River, right across from the Marsh Place. Marsh played an active role in this growth, yet still maintained his farm right on the periphery of the village. One of his early real estate projects was the development of a twenty-five-acre tract, located across the river from the Marsh Place and extending south to the village green. Charles Marsh purchased this in 1796 with a fellow investor, Jesse Williams, and the following year, they planned Elm Street to run through the property. Unlike the main road, which followed the natural



Figure 2.5: Charles Marsh's law office and the Congregational Church, view northwest from Elm Street, c.1860. Woodstock Historical Society.

topography, Elm Street was laid out in a straight line. At the same time, a wooden bridge was opened at the north end of the street, thus providing a direct connection from the village to Charles Marsh's house and farm on the north side of the river. Three years later in 1800, Marsh was involved in the northern extension of Elm Street as the Royalton and Woodstock Turnpike (later Route 12), which took the road along the edge of the terrace below which his farmhouse stood.<sup>23</sup>

Although no documentation survives as to why Marsh and Williams chose the alignment they did for Elm Street, Charles Marsh may have had a future site for his residence in mind. Looking north from the village across the Ottauquechee River, Elm Street aligned with a raised terrace at the foot of Mount Tom that would become the location of Marsh's new brick house, later known as the Mansion. Charles Marsh remained intimately familiar with Elm Street over the years, as it was the route between his home and the village. He also was responsible for selling off

the adjoining land, and was involved in planting American elms that would long grace the street; some of these trees originated as saplings that were transplanted from "Mr. Marsh's hill."<sup>24</sup>

Through the early decades of the nineteenth century, when Woodstock was a growing village and the surrounding countryside was booming with sheep farming, prominent business blocks, institutions, and residences were built along Elm Street, including Charles Marsh's law office—a modest frame building constructed in c.1797. It was later relocated farther north on the street adjoining the Congregational Church, built by Nathaniel Smith, Woodstock's prominent architect-builder. [Figure 2.5] In 1805, Smith would begin construction of Marsh's new brick house at the head of Elm Street.

With the opening of the first Elm Street Bridge in 1797, development began to occur on the north side of the Ottauquechee River along River Street, bordering the Marsh Place. In 1858, the Town of Woodstock granted a petition to survey and open a dead-end road known as North Street, which bordered the southwestern corner of the Mansion grounds. Soon a cluster of small houses was built there, on land sold off by the junior Charles Marsh.<sup>25</sup> [Figure 2.6] In the 1860s, two grander houses owned by the Fisher and Mason families were built on the north side of the Ottauquechee River along the south side of the intervalle. This property, also sold off by the junior Charles Marsh, was originally the Taylor farm purchased by his father in 1794.<sup>26</sup> A dead-end road, later called Moore Place, was built from Elm Street to access the two houses.

To the north and east of the Marsh Place were farms that generally clustered along the Royalton and Woodstock Turnpike (Route 12), and the Road to Taftsville (later known as River Road), which branched off from the turnpike at the northern side of the intervalle. [Figure 2.7] Adjoining the Mansion grounds to the north, between Barnard Brook (then known as the North Branch or Beaver Creek) and the turnpike, was a farm belonging to

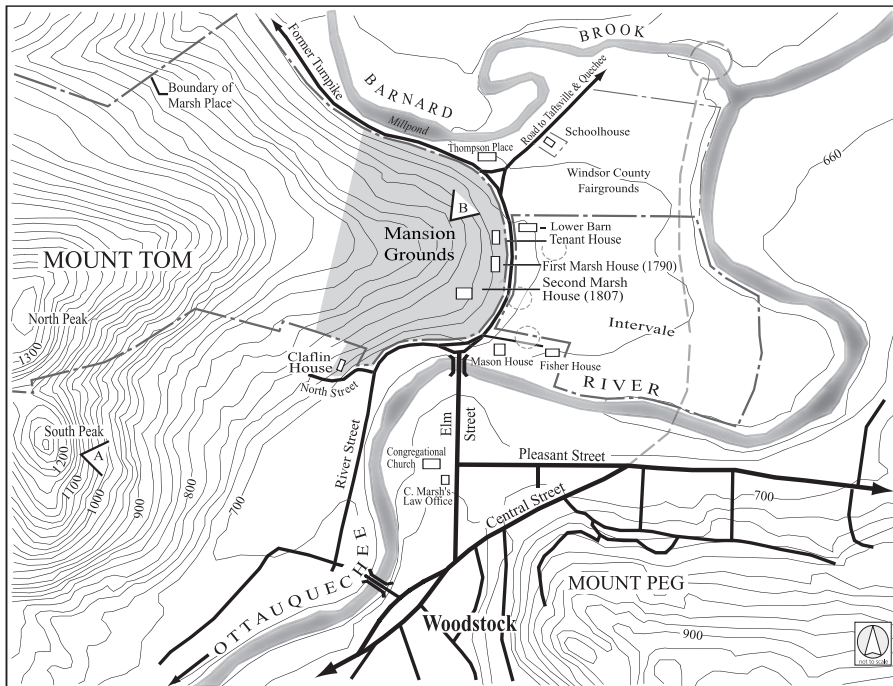


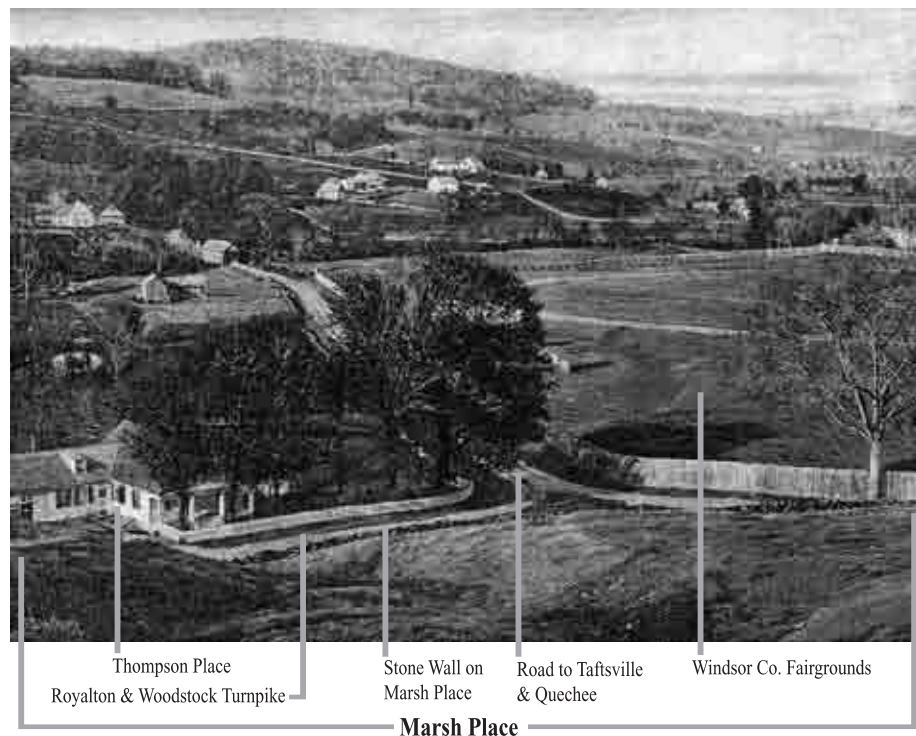
Figure 2.6: Map of Woodstock showing the context of the Mansion Grounds and eastern part of the Marsh Place, c.1869. SUNY ESF. Viewshed 'A' refers to Figure 2.4; viewshed 'B' refers to Figure 2.7.

the Dennison and later the Thompson families. The farmhouse, built in 1801, was located at the intersection of the turnpike and the Road to Taftsville. There was also a millpond on Brook west of the farmhouse.<sup>27</sup>

To the east of the Mansion grounds were the Marsh fields on the Ottauquechee River intervale, with a barn known as the "Lower Barn" located across the turnpike from the Marsh farmhouse.<sup>28</sup> The northern part of the intervale belonged to the Windsor County Agricultural Society, which purchased the land from the junior Charles Marsh in 1855 for the site of its fairgrounds. By the 1860s, the

fairgrounds were enclosed by a high wooden fence, and featured a track and several small buildings.<sup>29</sup> [Figure 2.7] In the middle of the fairgrounds, on the Road to Taftsville, was a public schoolhouse, the land for which Charles Marsh (Senior) had donated. West of the Mansion grounds, beyond the Marshes' woodlots and hill pastures, was a hill farm belonging to the Dana family on the west side of Mount Tom.

Figure 2.7: View from the Marsh Place looking northeast toward the Windsor County Fairgrounds, c.1865. Henry Swan Dana, *The History of Woodstock*. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1889), annotated by SUNY ESF. Noted as "Viewshed B" in Figure 2.5. In the 1880s, this area would become the country place district known as "Sunny Side."



### THE MARSH PLACE: INITIAL IMPROVEMENTS, 1789-1805

On January 5, 1789, Charles Marsh acquired James Cady's fifty-acre farm at the foot of Mount Tom for £150, £20 more than Cady had paid Charles Kilham for the land six years earlier, probably reflecting the added value of the Cady house. The property was a gift to Charles from his father, Joseph Marsh.<sup>30</sup> While the exact boundaries of the property are not known, the farm encompassed part of the Mansion grounds (as later established by Frederick Billings) as well as a portion of the intervalle.

After acquiring the property, Charles Marsh soon began building a new farmhouse, which he finished in the summer of the following year. He selected a site on an elevated terrace, above a "large shelving rock," instead of rebuilding the Cady house located lower down on the intervalle.<sup>31</sup> This new site not only protected the house from floods, but also allowed for expansive views east across fields on the intervalle.<sup>32</sup> With the opening of the local sawmill, Marsh was able to build a frame house, unlike the earlier Cady house, which was likely to have been built of logs. He employed the local millwright or carpenter Samuel Winslow, who worked on framing and sheathing the house and made the window sashes and frames, according to his account book of July 1790.<sup>33</sup>

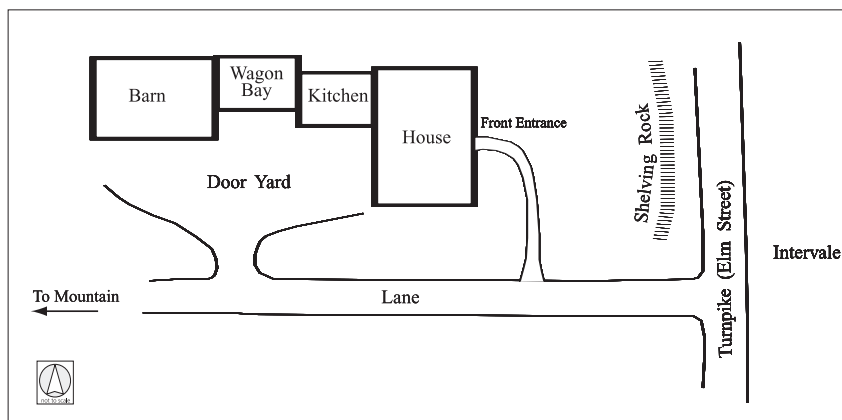
From later illustrations and maps, it is known that the house as originally constructed faced east across the intervalle [see Figure 2.11]. It was a very simple one-story, side-gable frame building with flush raking eaves and a central chimney stack. It appears to have had a four-bay plan with the front door set in the second bay from the south, a typical plan for the time.<sup>34</sup> At the back of the house was a barn, built with its ridge perpendicular to the house, which was probably connected to the main farmhouse by a wagon bay and kitchen wing. Although connected farm buildings would not become prevalent in New England until the

second half of the nineteenth century, Charles Marsh apparently made use of this innovative plan.<sup>35</sup> Connected farm buildings held several advantages, including ease of access during the winter between house and barn, and creation of a sheltered south-facing space commonly known as a dooryard.<sup>36</sup> [Figure 2.8]

The original entry road to the Marsh Place may have led off the pent road to John Strong's Mill located down on the intervalle; however, the opening of the Elm Street Bridge in 1797 allowed access along the later alignment of the turnpike (Route 12). Off the turnpike, the entry road ran parallel to the south side of the Marsh house. The kitchen garden was probably located across the entry road from the house, on south-facing level ground. Such gardens were a necessary component of early Vermont farmsteads, and were where vegetables such as peas, cabbage, beans, turnips, beets, carrots, and potatoes were raised for family use. For water supply, Charles Marsh initially tapped an unreliable spring near his garden, probably at the back of the house, but soon turned to a more steady spring on the north slope of the hill, opposite the Dennison/Thompson millpond on the North Branch (Barnard Brook). Historian Dana recorded in the 1880s:

*Upon moving into the first house he [Charles Marsh] thought to get his supply of water from a spring back in the garden, but this did not*

Figure 2.8: Plan of the Marsh house and connected buildings, c.1800, based on 1839 woodcut illustration (Billings Family Archives) and c.1859 Presdee & Edwards map of Woodstock (Norman Williams Public Library, Woodstock). SUNY ESF.



*succeed. He thereupon had water brought to his house by means of pump-logs from a spring on the north side of the hill, over against the millpond. This was the first aqueduct laid anywhere in this region.*<sup>37</sup>

While farming was a necessity for families of this period, it was not Charles Marsh's primary occupation. With his legal profession and business affairs, Charles Marsh was a gentleman farmer who oversaw operation of the farm, but left most of the daily physical labor to hired hands. In the 1790s, Marsh built a house for his hired hands a short distance north of the family house on the same rise overlooking the intervale.<sup>38</sup> This building was a one-story side-gable frame house, not unlike the main house<sup>39</sup> [see Figure 2.11]. The tenant house did not have a connected barn, but did have a small freestanding shed in the back.

During the 1790s, Charles Marsh acquired most of the intervale east of his house. Here on the rich agricultural soils, he may have grown crops such as wheat, corn, flax, oats, hay, and barley.<sup>40</sup> Contrasting with the level, fertile intervale was the sloping and rocky terrain to the west of the house within the Mansion grounds, which Marsh cleared for pasture, since its thin, rocky soils would have been unproductive for crops. This land, including the steep foothill of Mount Tom directly west of the house, was probably forested when Marsh acquired it. In 1797, for example, historian Dana wrote that Marsh cleared the forest that sloped down to the Ottauquechee River to the southwest of the house—near where Frederick Billings would build his greenhouses—for a pasture.<sup>41</sup> Marsh may have initially used this pasture for a small number of cattle, sheep, and swine to supply the family with meat and dairy products.<sup>42</sup>

### **A PROMINENT HOMESTEAD, 1805-1849**

By the turn of the century, Charles Marsh's farmhouse was becoming too small for his family and too modest for his stature. His family had grown to include four children (another three would be born over the next two decades),

and he had become a leading figure in the business, legal, and philanthropic affairs of Woodstock. In 1805, he contracted with Nathaniel Smith, Woodstock's architect-builder, to begin construction of a new house. Marsh selected a site just south and uphill from his old house and set back from the turnpike, uphill of where James Cady's house had once stood. This site would retain the expansive views east across the intervale, but would also gain a panoramic view south over Woodstock village. From the village, the new house would dominate the view up Elm Street.

Within two years, the house was sufficiently complete, and in the fall of 1807 the family moved in. Many years later, a Mr. T. S. Brown of Montreal wrote a letter to the local newspaper, the *Vermont Standard*, in which he recalled the condition of the Marsh Place soon after the house had been completed:

*When I first saw Woodstock, in 1809 . . . [the] one story house, afterwards known as the Parker house [old Marsh house], was then in good condition and that of Mr. Marsh . . . was certainly a grand edifice for the times. It was spacious and remarkably well built throughout. The garden and grounds in front were in perfect order. A goodly supply of materials for building must have been laid in, for I can remember quantities of glass and paint, lead and nails, and larger requisites that had remained over when the work was completed.*<sup>43</sup>

As completed, Marsh's second house was a relatively large brick structure with Federal-style detailing and proportions, a considerable advance over the earlier frame house. [Figure 2.9] Nathaniel Smith would use the same style in construction of the Congregational Church on Elm Street, which he completed in 1808. The Federal style, at the height of fashion during the first decade of the nineteenth century, was a refinement over the earlier Georgian style popular during Colonial times, and was characterized by simplicity, symmetry, attenuated proportions, and classically derived decoration.

On the exterior, Charles Marsh's second house was plainer than others built around the same time in the village,





**Figure 2.9:** The south front of the second Marsh House in later years from a stereograph by Henry Cushing, c.1869, with the south lane in the foreground. Woodstock Historical Society.

perhaps reflecting a conservative Calvinist outlook. The house was a full two stories in height with a gable roof, overhanging eaves with narrow moldings and returns, paired chimney stacks on the south and north gable walls, unadorned brick walls painted red, and louvered twelve-over-twelve double-hung sash windows. In response to its prominent site, the house was designed with two fronts: one a slightly more formal facade facing east across toward the *intervale*, and one facing south toward the village, on axis with Elm Street.<sup>44</sup> The south facade was in the gable wall, and was five bays wide with a center entrance and a stone stringcourse between the first and second floors. The entrance consisted of paired doors, an arched transom in a fanlight pattern, and a thin enframing with pilasters. The east facade was similar, except that it was on the longer side of the house without a gable wall, had

narrow sidelight windows to either side of the entrance, and may have had a larger second-floor window above the entrance—perhaps a Palladian window. Off the rear northwest corner of the house was a one-story kitchen wing.<sup>45</sup> Unlike the old house, there were no agricultural buildings connected to it.

Along with construction of the second house, Charles Marsh also made improvements to the surrounding grounds, which had previously served as pasture and probably as part of the family's kitchen garden. He had a second lane laid out to the south of the new house, which connected through a rear yard with the existing lane, forming an orthogonal organization to the landscape.<sup>46</sup> [Figure 2.10] The new south lane served as the formal access, since it led to the south and

east entrances of the house. The old road, identified in surveys as the “north lane,” continued to serve as the main farm road, measuring approximately three rods (fifty feet) from fence to fence, although the actual width of the roadbed was about half that.<sup>47</sup> The rear yard was lined by four outbuildings framing a rectangular space. These outbuildings, which in part supplemented the earlier barn attached to the old house, included a barn and two other sheds or storehouses at the head of the north lane, and a carriage shed at the end of the south lane.<sup>48</sup> [Figure 2.10] The organization of the rear yard was not the typical, linear layout found at the old house. The arrangement was more of a hybrid between a typical farmstead and a village residence, reflecting Charles Marsh's gentleman-farmer status.

During construction of the second house and continuing for years afterward, Charles Marsh also made improvements to the surrounding landscape. In c.1806, when many village residents were doing likewise, he had a row of

Lombardy poplars set in front of the house along the south lane or the turnpike. The Lombardy poplar, a tall and narrow tree from Italy, became popular in the United States with the fashion for Classical antiquity during the early nineteenth century. In northern climates such as Vermont, however, the Lombardy poplar was not long lived. Most in the village died within a short time, although two or three around Charles Marsh's house survived longer.<sup>49</sup>

In 1808, two years after setting out the poplars, Marsh selected a native tree—the American elm—to further grace the approach to his new house, probably as an extension of the elms that were being planted along Elm Street in the village. He set out the elms along the turnpike, from the Elm Street bridge north in front of his house. In c.1820, Marsh also planted two rows of elms in the pasture on the south side of the house. Most of these did not survive, purportedly due to poor soil conditions.<sup>50</sup>

The south pasture, which faced the village where it was visible from Elm Street, was more refined than other pastures on the farm, suggesting that Marsh intended it for ornamental as well as agricultural purposes. It was given a lawn-like appearance by removing most of its glacial stones, except for a large boulder.<sup>51</sup> In 1814, Marsh had a stone wall built around this pasture, beginning at his carriage shed, extending along the outer edge of the south lane, and then continuing along the edge of the turnpike to River Street. Unlike stone walls built around other pastures, Marsh built the one around the south pasture with broad, flat capstones, giving further refinement to the landscape.<sup>52</sup>

On the east front and north sides of the second house, Charles Marsh maintained a garden enclosed along the south lane and turnpike by a white-painted wooden fence with delicate rounded pickets, and along the north lane with a stepped stone wall. The fence was probably built along

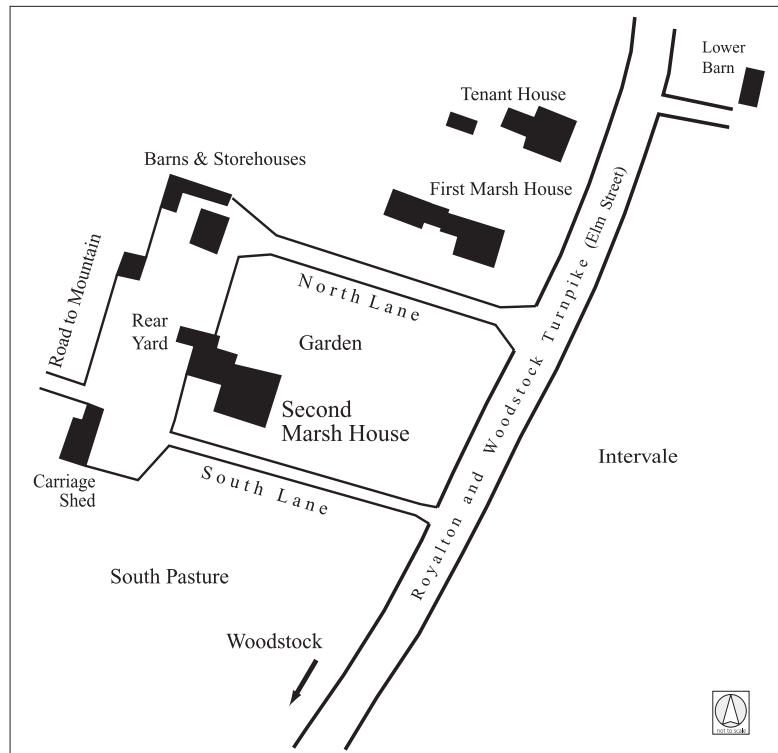


Figure 2.10: Organization of the landscape around the second Marsh House based on c.1859 Presdee & Edwards map of Woodstock (Norman Williams Public Library, Woodstock). SUNY-ESF.

with the house between 1805 and 1807, although it was first documented in 1839.<sup>53</sup> Aside from the presence of deciduous trees that shaded much of the east front, little documentation has survived on the landscape of the garden.

The water supply for Charles Marsh's new house may still have come from the spring on the north side of the hill near the millpond, the same supply that served his first house through log pipes. By the 1830s, however, this system was apparently failing. In 1834, Marsh considered tapping into a spring located at the rear of his tenant house, where he considered digging a stone well with connecting pipes to his house.<sup>54</sup> In 1835, however, Marsh instead dug a well at the rear of his garden, to the north of the rear kitchen wing on his new house. In this same area, Marsh also maintained a drain that ran from the kitchen wing through a swale at the rear of the first house and tenant house.<sup>55</sup>

Once the family moved into their new house, Charles Marsh rented out the old house. In 1808, it was occupied



**Figure 2.11:** The Reverend B. C. C. Parker property in 1839, comprising the first Marsh house (left) and tenant house (right). View is northwest from the turnpike (Elm Street), with the north lane in the foreground. From an advertisement; original source unknown. Billings Family Archives.

by Henry B. Brown, who remained in it for about four years. It was subsequently rented to General Asaph Fletcher. In August 1829, Marsh decided to sell the house, along with about one acre of land and a “woodhouse” to Colonel Bushrod W. Rice of Woodstock for \$1,000, although Marsh retained rights to his drain through the swale at the back of the property. The deed also granted Rice common access to the north lane, which remained on Marsh’s property. Four years later, in April 1833, Rice sold the property to Reverend B. C. C. Parker, the rector of St. James Episcopal Church in Woodstock, for \$1,300. Reverend Parker needed more land so, in the following year, Marsh sold him the adjoining tenant house and surrounding one acre of land for a mere \$150. As part of this sale, Marsh wrote into the deed a guarantee for his right to the spring on the north side of the lot. These two properties ran about 600 feet along the turnpike and extended 265 feet back to the edge of the hillside. Both were enclosed by a four-rail fence.<sup>56</sup>

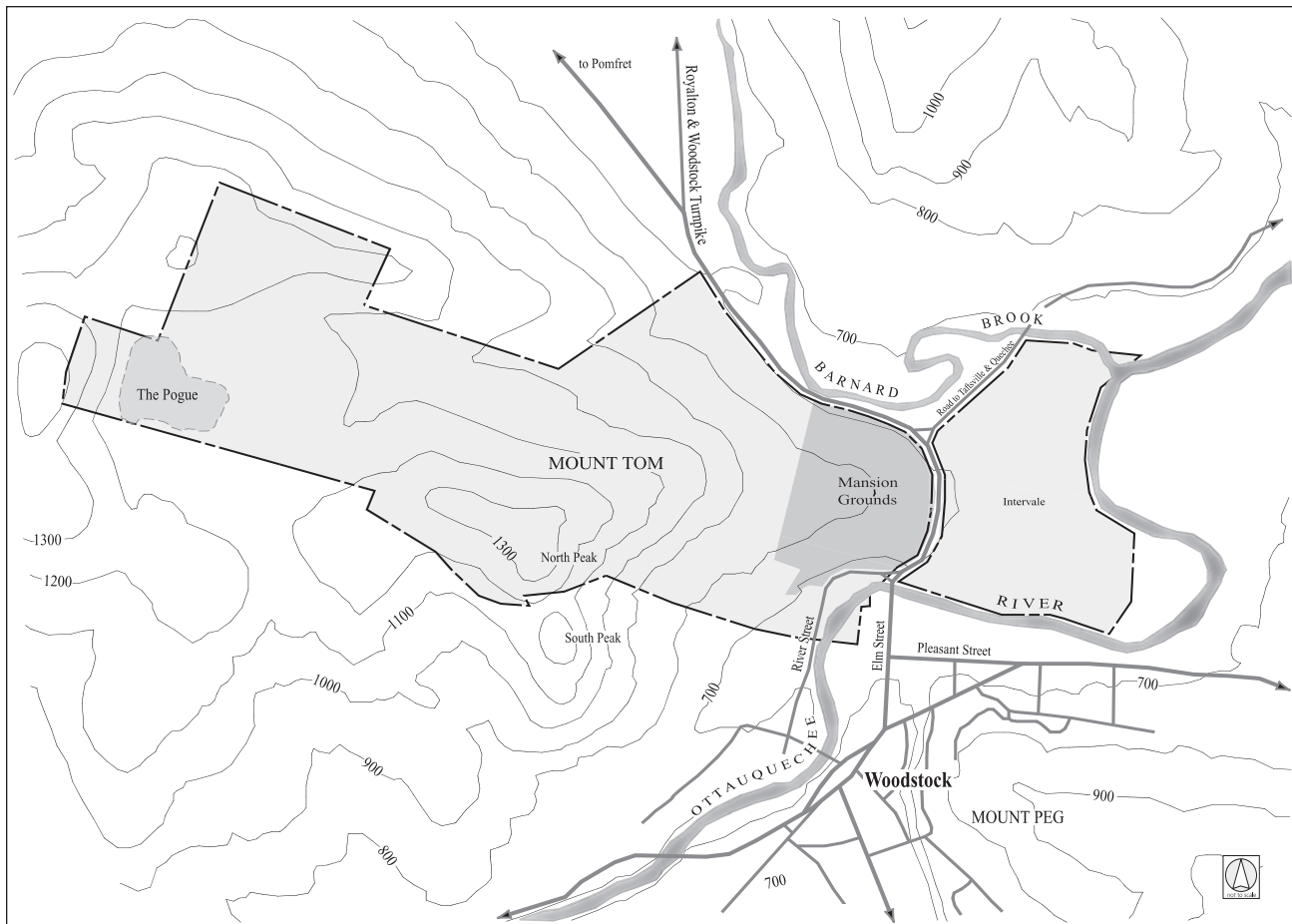
In c.1839, Reverend Parker built a large addition on the south side of the first Marsh house, occupying the east end of the barnyard. He built this addition as a schoolhouse to

accommodate a “Female High School,” opened in 1839. On October 1 of that year, Parker ran a newspaper advertisement for his new school, which illustrated the campus, including the new school-house wing, as well as the old connected barn and wagon bay in the background.<sup>57</sup> [Figure 2.11] By this time, a wrap-around porch had been added to the house. The house was depicted as being on top of a raised embankment that required a set of stairs leading up to the front

porch. To the immediate north was the old tenant house, to which an open wrap-around porch had also been added. The entire front of the property, shaded by several large deciduous trees, was enclosed by a four-rail fence. Rather than from the turnpike, the entrance to the house was through a gate along Charles Marsh’s north lane, where the property was bordered by the shelving rock and a drop in grade. According to his advertisement, Reverend Parker intended the school to be “particularly for persons, wishing to preparing themselves for teaching-or to pursue advanced stages of female studies.” In 1841, Parker put up another wing for use as an office or library.<sup>58</sup> The school did not last long after this time, and once it closed, the Reverend Parker moved to New York City.<sup>59</sup>

By the 1840s when Reverend Parker’s school closed, Charles Marsh was an elder citizen of Woodstock with a large, prosperous farm. He and his son Charles, who helped run the family farm, were prominent in the agricultural community. The younger Charles was appointed secretary of the Windsor County Agricultural Society in 1846, when it held its first annual fair, probably on the Marsh’s intervale meadow.<sup>60</sup> In 1847, the Marshes sold a fifty-acre portion of the intervale as a permanent home for the fair.<sup>61</sup> The fair, however, was soon discontinued and the land reverted to the Marsh family.

By this time, the elder Charles Marsh had assembled many parcels of land; since building his second house in 1805, he



had created a farm significantly larger than the 139-acre farm that was the average for Vermont in the 1840s. A survey made prior to 1847 documented the Marsh farm as extending across the Ottauquechee River intervale, across the North Peak of Mount Tom, and a short distance beyond the hilltop bog known at the time as Pogue Hole.<sup>62</sup> [Figure 2.12] The intervale fields made up roughly ninety acres of the farm. Most of the remaining acreage consisted of pastures and woodlots on and around Mount Tom, a large part of which was probably used for raising sheep by the 1840s. In 1850, the United States census showed that the Marshes owned four hundred acres in Woodstock, and also recorded that the farm contained ninety-five sheep and five milk cows, and produced crops of corn, oats, potatoes, hay, and maple sugar.<sup>63</sup>

In accordance with the large size of the farm and its commanding position at the head of Elm Street, the Marsh Place was shown by mapmakers during the first half of the

**Figure 2.12: Map of the Marsh Place, showing known maximum extent under ownership by Charles Marsh (Senior), c.1847, based on surveys in the Billings Family Archives. The later boundaries of the Mansion grounds are shown in dark gray. SUNY ESF.**

nineteenth century as the most prominent residence in Woodstock.<sup>64</sup> [Figure 2.13] The Marshes were hospitable and charitable people, and the place was well known by many residents and visitors to Woodstock, as reflected in historian Dana's account:

*But superior as the house was among all the buildings in the neighborhood at that time [when Charles Marsh (Senior) lived there], more conspicuous still was the princely hospitality with which it was kept by the proprietor for many years. Ministers of the gospel, lawyers, doctors, schoolmasters, strangers from abroad, all put up at Mr. Marsh's house, and found a*

ready welcome. Furthermore, to every wanderer who knocked at the door Mrs. Marsh gave something; every strolling minstrel that came grinding his hand-organ about the premises, in addition to the piece of money bestowed on such occasions, bore away some special gift or gratuity as a testimonial of this good lady's sympathy.<sup>65</sup>

Despite the prominence of the Marsh Place during this period, a detailed description of its landscape during its ownership by Charles Marsh (Senior) remains unknown. It was not until the late 1850s and 1860s that a more complete account of the landscape of the Mansion grounds was documented.

### THE MARSH PLACE UNDER THE SECOND GENERATION, 1847-1869

In 1847, the elderly Charles and Susan Marsh considered the future of their farm. All of their children had successful careers and lives apart from the farm, except for his youngest, Charles, who was twenty-six at this time. To secure the future ownership and operation of the place, Charles Marsh sold three hundred acres of the farm, a large portion of the property he once owned, to Charles for one dollar. This transaction was recorded in a deed that was executed on May 26, 1847 in the witness of George Perkins Marsh and Wyllys Lyman, the husband of the Marshes' daughter Sarah. Charles Marsh (Senior) described this property as:

*All that farm of land in said Woodstock now and for many years last past by me occupied as a homestead containing three hundred acres or*

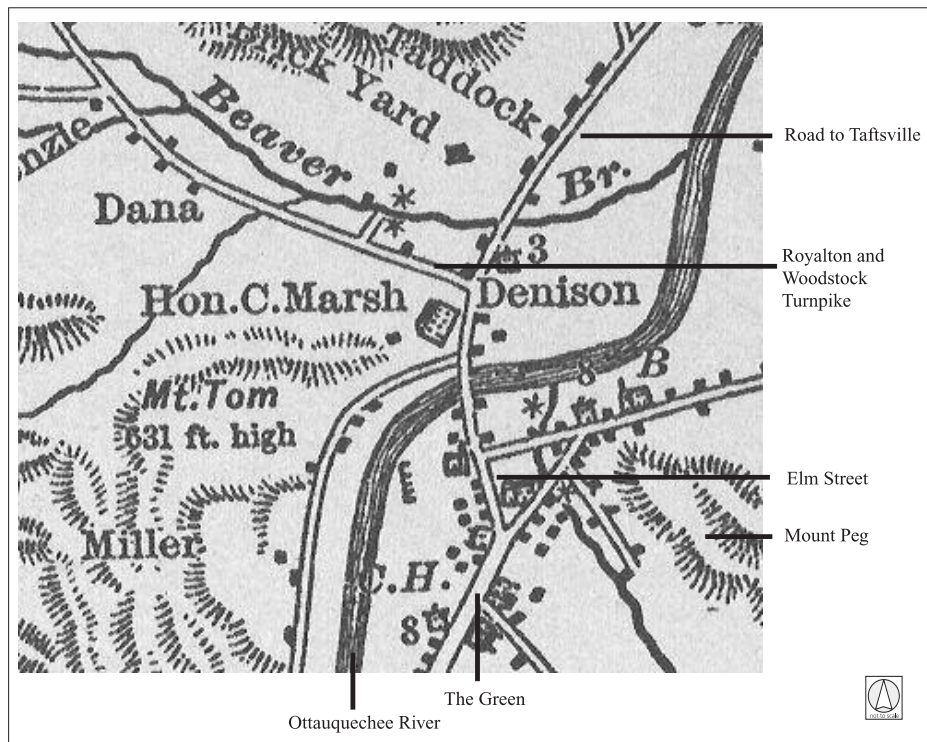


Figure 2.13: Detail, "Copy of a Map of Woodstock in 1832 Drawn by a Committee from the Woodstock Institute, 1832" (New York: Struthers & Co., Eng'rs., no date). Woodstock Historical Society, annotated by SUNY ESF.

*thereabouts more or less together with all the live stock and farming tools and implements now on or belonging to said farm and the hay and grain in the barns and storehouses thereon.*<sup>66</sup>

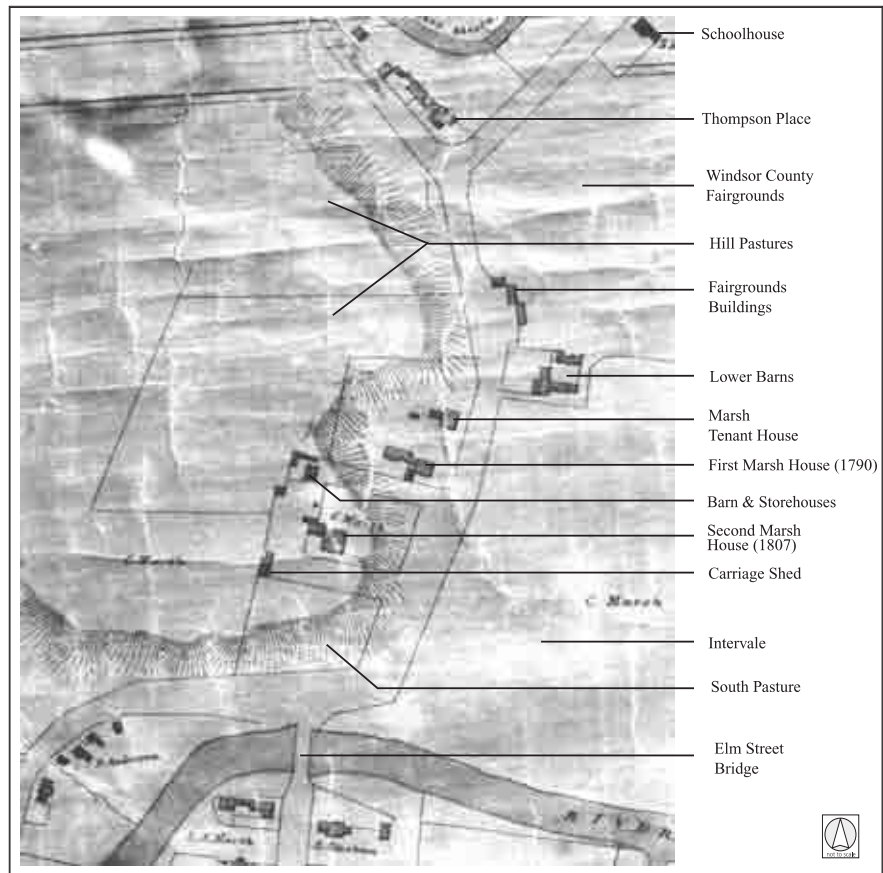
After the death of his father on January 11, 1849, Charles Marsh (Junior) continued the farm and lived in the second house with his mother, Susan Perkins Marsh, until her death there four years later on January 31, 1853.<sup>67</sup> Charles did not have a family of his own, and apparently lived in the house by himself after his mother's death. At the time, the agricultural economy in Vermont was beginning to decline, especially with increasing competition from Western farmers. To compensate, many Vermont farmers during the period increased the cultivation of fewer acres, usually through crop rotation, the use of machinery, and additional labor. Livestock generally continued to be more profitable than crops for the mass market, although sheep farming declined significantly between 1850 and 1870.<sup>68</sup> Despite this trend,

Marsh increased his flock of sheep from 95 to 212 between 1850 and 1860, producing 700 pounds of wool annually.<sup>69</sup> He continued to grow oats, corn, hay, and potatoes and raise dairy cattle. He also produced sugar from maple trees in woodlots on Mount Tom.<sup>70</sup>

Despite his efforts, Marsh was probably realizing smaller profits from his farm, especially since he had become increasingly reliant on the declining sheep trade. Between 1850 and 1860, the Marsh farm decreased in value from \$10,000 to \$8,000; some of this probably reflected Marsh's sale in 1855 of forty of his most productive *intervale* acres for \$2,000 to the Windsor County Agricultural Society for use as their fairgrounds. This property was almost the same as the parcel the Marshes had briefly sold for the fair in 1847.<sup>71</sup> By 1869, Charles Marsh had also sold off an additional ten different parcels of land from the farm, probably to make up for lagging profits. All told, he sold off roughly 53 acres, reducing the total acreage of the farm to 247 acres by 1869.<sup>72</sup>

Without rising value or income from the farm, it is unlikely that the younger Charles Marsh made any substantial changes to the house and surrounding garden and pastures over the two decades that he owned the place following the death of his father. A fairly detailed glimpse of the Marsh Place and the landscape within the Mansion grounds was recorded through a map produced by the firm of Presdee & Edwards in c.1859, and three photographs of the house and farm taken between 1868 and 1869.<sup>73</sup> [Figures 2.9, 2.14-2.16]

These photographs document that in the late 1860s, the landscape of the Mansion grounds was largely open pasture, with scattered woodlots on Mount Tom. There



**Figure 2.14:** Detail, Presdee & Edwards, "Map of Woodstock, Windsor County, Vermont" (New York: Lithograph of Sarony & Major, c.1859), annotated by SUNY ESF. Courtesy Norman Williams Public Library, Woodstock, Vermont. Lines on the map represent walls, fences, and the edges of public rights-of-way.

was apparently little change to the second Marsh house since it was built over sixty years earlier, except for replacement of the original twelve-light window sashes with more fashionable six-light ones that became popular in the second quarter of the century. Whether Charles (Junior) installed these sashes when he inherited the house after 1847, or whether they were a slightly earlier addition made by his father is not known. According to the 1859 Presdee & Edwards map, a second kitchen wing had also been added to the house, probably when the Marsh family was at its largest earlier in the century.

After his father's death, Charles Marsh maintained the lanes, garden, outbuildings, and pastures that surrounded the house with few changes. As shown in the 1860s



Figure 2.15: Early spring view of the Marsh Place, taken from Mount Peg looking north over Woodstock village, c.1869. Woodstock Historical Society.

photographs, the north lane was a relatively broad earthen drive that provided the primary access to the kitchen, barn, and outbuildings to the rear of the house. It formed a triangular intersection with the turnpike, and was closed off by a white-painted swinging gate just above the entrance to the first Marsh house. The narrower south lane was also closed off by a gate, part of a white-painted two-plank fence that spanned the south pasture stone wall, and the front garden picket fence. Along the north side of the south lane were three young sugar maples, and a large elm was at the end of the lane off the southwest corner of the house. This elm would later grow to be the largest specimen tree on the grounds. The south entrance of the house was accessed via a short walk from the south lane, which ascended a set of stone steps. Alongside the walk was a stone mounting block set into the bank, and farther up the drive there was a stone hitching post. The walk to the east-front entrance of the house may have branched off this walk inside the picket fence.

On the approach to the Marsh Place, a footpath followed the turnpike leading up to the south lane. Spreading elms planted by Charles's father in 1808 lined the east side of the

turnpike, which had become a public road in the early 1840s. The turnpike was two dirt tracks with a dividing grass strip; just above the Elm Street Bridge, the road divided into upper and lower lanes that formed a sloped triangular island.

At the rear of the house, young Charles Marsh made two changes to the rectangular yard with its four outbuildings. The carriage barn, with its side-gable roof and open front composed of three bays, remained at the southwest corner, and the barns and storehouses at the northeast corner. At some point between c.1859 and 1869, Marsh added a new well on the south side of the kitchen wing to replace the one on the north side. It featured a hip-roofed well house. Another addition dating to the younger Marsh's tenure was a Norway spruce at the back of the kitchen wing, probably planted in the 1850s as an ornamental feature.

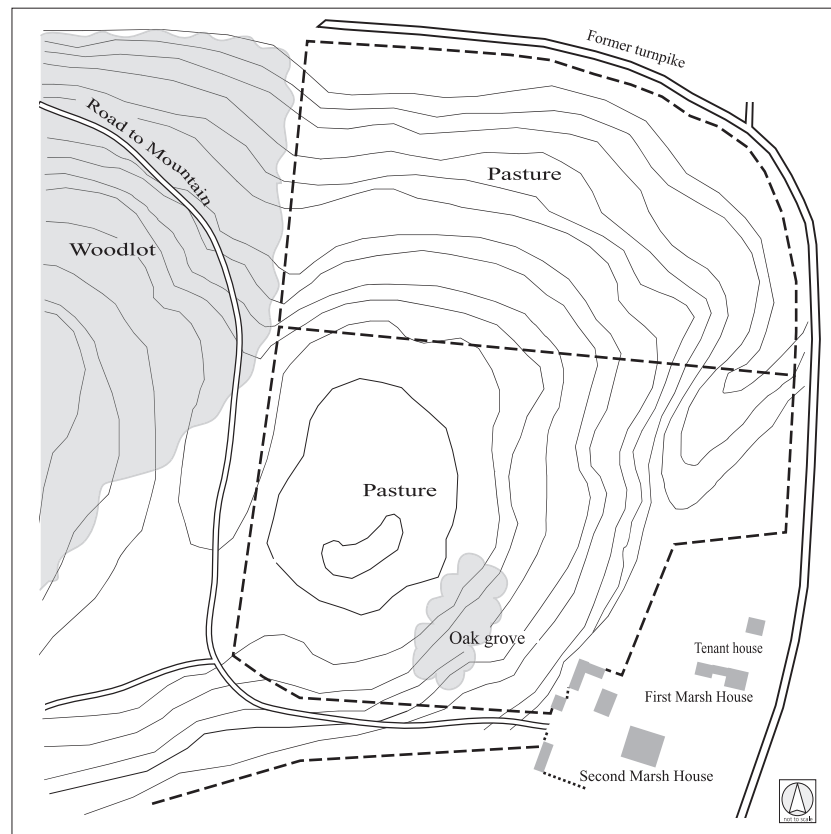


Figure 2.16: Winter view of the Marsh Place, taken from Mount Peg looking north over Woodstock village, c.1869. Billings Farm & Museum.

In the late 1860s, the east front of the Marsh house, extending down to the turnpike, remained enclosed by a white-painted picket fence. Marsh referred to it in an 1855 deed as his “farm house garden as now enclosed.”<sup>74</sup> The area directly in front of the house was shaded by mature deciduous trees, and the refined stone wall with its broad capstones still enclosed the south pasture, with its lawn-like appearance. Several deciduous trees were scattered in this pasture, in the vicinity of the boulder, probably survivors of the two rows of elms that the elder Charles Marsh had set out in c.1820. Beyond it to the west was a rocky pasture with scrubby trees, which was enclosed by a wooden cross-and-rail fence. To the north of the Marsh house and north lane stood the first Marsh house and the tenant house. The junior Charles Marsh had reacquired these houses and the two acres of land on which they stood from Frances Parker of Boston for \$1,150 on August 15, 1859.<sup>75</sup> Frances Parker was the widow of Reverend B. C. C. Parker, who had died in 1857 in New York. For the first time in over four decades, the old Marsh house was back under Marsh family ownership.

The hill behind the Marsh house was kept as two large, rectangular pastures extending from the hilltop down toward the turnpike. [Figures 2.16, 2.17] Each was enclosed by cross-and-rail fences or

Figure 2.17: Diagram of the hill, c.1869. SUNY ESF, based on Presdee & Edwards Map of c.1859 and c.1865 engraving in Dana, *History of Woodstock* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1889). Dashed lines indicate approximate location of fences and walls.





stone walls, and the barren land was broken only by shrub-by trees and rock outcroppings, except for an oak grove on the south-facing slope behind the Marsh house. These pastures were accessed by an extension of the north lane that ran along the south slope of the hill, and then branched at the top, with one leg probably leading toward the southwestern side of Mount Tom, the other crossing the hilltop and extending up the north slope of the mountain.<sup>76</sup> West of the hill pastures was a mature deciduous woodlot that Charles Marsh would have used to harvest fuel wood, timber, and maple sap to produce maple sugar, as evidenced by the lumber sleigh and maple sugaring implements he owned.<sup>77</sup>

## LANDSCAPE SUMMARY

Beginning in 1789, Charles Marsh transformed the landscape at the eastern foot of Mount Tom on and around the Mansion grounds from a rough fifty-acre farm to a refined homestead and farm of four hundred acres occupying a broad, fertile interval of the Ottauquechee River and the east side of Mount Tom. In 1789-1790, Marsh constructed a frame house with a connected barn, and added a tenant house nearby soon after. Fifteen years later, he built a much larger Federal-style brick residence that reflected his wealth and social stature in the community. Unlike a typical farmhouse, the second house reflected Marsh's status as a gentleman farmer whose life revolved not only around agriculture, but also around the political, business, and social life of the village. Its refined architecture, surrounding orthogonal circulation, fenced-in front garden, and lawn-like south pasture had characteristics of both town and country. Such characteristics were even reflected in the expansive views from the house, which looked east over fields on the interval and south over the spires and rooftops of Woodstock village. In aspiration as well as physical location, the second Marsh house and its refined surroundings were the forerunners of the more expansive landscape that Frederick Billings developed there in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In 1869, Billings would purchase the farm from the junior Charles Marsh, who had acquired the property from his father in

1847 and maintained it over the course of more than two decades, meeting with limited business success. The reasons why Marsh decided to sell had to do in part with health problems and also with financial difficulty.<sup>78</sup> After the sale, the forty-eight year-old Marsh moved away from Woodstock. He settled in San Diego, California, where he died on May 13, 1873.<sup>79</sup>

While there is little documentation that environmental degradation on the scale that George Perkins Marsh described in *Man and Nature* was evident at the Marsh Place by the 1860s, the loss of significant forest cover and agricultural practices were likely to have been impacting the natural environment. George's brother Charles may have been a relatively good steward of the land, but he made few improvements to the property. By the 1860s, the Marsh Place no longer reflected its prosperous origins, nor would it have been considered a beautiful landscape, certainly not in comparison with scenes depicted by the Hudson River School or with country estates then being developed by the industrial elite. It remained for the new owner, Frederick Billings, to return the Mansion grounds to a model of rural improvement by reflecting current fashions in architecture and landscape design, and by implementing progressive stewardship practices that reflected the conservation philosophy of George Perkins Marsh.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Frederick Billings used the term "Marsh Place," and wrote in the 1880s that this was the name the property "goes by." George Perkins Marsh Papers, University of Vermont, Burlington [hereafter, "GPM Papers"], carton 7, folder 67, Frederick Billings to Caroline Marsh, 8 November 1882. Henry Swan Dana, in his *History of Woodstock* (Taftsville, VT: Countryman Press, 1980 reprint of 1889 edition), refers to "Mr. Marsh's hill," 197; and "Marsh hill," 79.

<sup>2</sup> David Lowenthal, *George Perkins Marsh: Prophet of Conservation* (Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 2000), 7-8.

<sup>3</sup> Lowenthal, 9-11; Dana, *The History of Woodstock*, 468.

<sup>4</sup> Dana, 468.

<sup>5</sup> According to his will (unless he was alienated from his children). Will of Charles Marsh, November 1873, carton 6, folder 24, GPM Papers.

<sup>6</sup> Dana, 470.

<sup>7</sup> Lowenthal, 19; Jan Albers, *Hands on the Land* (Cambridge: MIT, 2000), 198.

<sup>8</sup> Esther Swift, Librarian and Archivist of the Billings Farm & Museum, interview by John Auwaerter, November 2000, Woodstock.

<sup>9</sup> Josias Lyndon Arnold, *Poems / by the late Josias Lyndon Arnold, Esquire of St. Johnsbury (Vermont) / Formerly of Providence and a Tutor in Rhode Island College*. Providence: Carter and Wilkinson, 1797.

<sup>10</sup> "Ode to Connecticut River": Poem republished in Coates, John Walter and Frederick Tupper, editors, *Vermont Verse: An Anthology*. (Brattleboro: Stephen Daye Press, c.1932), 28. Copy courtesy of Esther Munroe Swift, Billings Farm & Museum Library [hereafter, "BFM"].

<sup>11</sup> Letters of George Perkins Marsh, quoted in Lowenthal, 19.

<sup>12</sup> Lowenthal, 275, 294.

<sup>13</sup> Christopher McGrory Klyza and Stephen Trombulak, *The Story of Vermont* (Hanover, NH: Middlebury College Press, 1999), 66.

<sup>14</sup> George Perkins Marsh, *Man and Nature* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1965 reprint of 1864 edition), 43.

<sup>15</sup> According to Marsh biographer David Lowenthal: "*Man and Nature* ushered in a revolution in the way people conceived their relations with the earth. His insights made a growing public aware of how massively humans transform their milieus. Many before Marsh had pondered the extent of our impact on one or another fact of nature. But most took it for granted that such impacts were largely benign, that malign effects were trivial or ephemeral. None had seen how ubiquitous and intertwined were these effects, both wanted and unwanted. Marsh was the first to conjoin all human agency in a somber global picture. The sweep of his data, the clarity of his synthesis, and the force of his conclusion made *Man and Nature* an almost instant classic." Lowenthal, 268.

<sup>16</sup> Lowenthal, 291.

<sup>17</sup> Charles Marsh and George Perkins Marsh correspondence: 27 April 1855, 11 October 1857, 13 January 1859, 22

March 1859, 5 May 1859, 17 July 1861. GPM Papers.

<sup>18</sup> C.1860s photograph of Mount Tom from the east, Woodstock Historical Society [hereafter, "WHS"]; Stereograph of Woodstock looking toward the Marsh Place, c.1869, P9, Billings Family Archives [hereafter, "BFA"].

<sup>19</sup> State of Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, "Vermont Historic Preservation Plan / Agriculture Theme," Overview (May 1990), 1.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Census of 1850, cited in Mark Madison, "Models and Morals: Billings Farm Agriculture and Forestry, 1870-1890" (unpublished paper, chapter 3 of "Historical Essay" dated 17 June 1997), BFM.

<sup>21</sup> Cited in Sarah Wilcke et al., "Cultural Landscape Report for the Forest at Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park" (National Park Service and University of Vermont, March 2000), 20.

<sup>22</sup> Census figures cited in Dana, 549.

<sup>23</sup> Dana, *History of Woodstock*, 177, 504, 539-40. The tollgate for the turnpike was located about three miles to the north in Pomfret, so Marsh did not have to pay for use of the short distance between the river and his house. The turnpike remained in operation until about 1842, after which time it became a public road.

<sup>24</sup> Dana, 438, 197.

<sup>25</sup> Woodstock Town, Record of Roads, v. 1, page 69, 1 June 1858: "Petition and Survey of Road from River Street up the hill past the dwelling of Nathan Claflin . . ."; Dana, 177.

<sup>26</sup> Dana, 182, 192, 195-96; Photograph of the Marsh Place, c.1864-69, WHS. The upper lot closest to the Elm Street Bridge was purchased in 1861 by Benjamin F. Mason, a noted painter. His brother Marshall built him an Italianate villa there, later known as Echo Acre. The lower or easterly of the two lots was sold to Isaac M. Fisher, a local builder who constructed a simple gable-front and ell house there in 1866. The Mason house was inherited by the Moore family in 1890, hence the name of the street.

<sup>27</sup> Presdee & Edwards, "Map of Woodstock, Windsor County, Vermont" (New York: Lithograph of Sarony & Major, c.1859), Norman Williams Public Library, Woodstock, Vermont.

<sup>28</sup> Dana, 192; As documented on an 1859 map, several structures, probably including the "Lower Barn," stood just

north and downhill from the Marsh house. Presdee & Edwards, Map of Woodstock, c.1859.

<sup>29</sup> “View Taken About 1865, From the Marsh Place, Looking Down the Road by Cushing Farm to Taftsville.” Plate in Dana, *History of Woodstock*, between pages 492-93.

<sup>30</sup> Woodstock Town Land Records, James Cady to Charles Marsh, vol. 2, page 51, 5 January 1789; Dana, 193.

<sup>31</sup> The term “shelving rock” is used in deeds for the property; see Woodstock Town Land Records, Bushrod W. Rice to Benjamin C. C. Parker, 20 April 1833, vol. 10, page 190.

<sup>32</sup> According to Dana, Charles Marsh favored this spot because it “gave a commanding view of all the meadow round about, and in general of the whole farm.” Dana, 194.

<sup>33</sup> Account book of Samuel Winslow, recorded in Dana, 193, fn. 2.

<sup>34</sup> The Marsh house is illustrated in an advertisement for the “Female High School, Woodstock, Vermont” which was conducted in the house by Rev. B. C. C. Parker, dated October 1, 1839, source unknown; probably a Woodstock-area newspaper. Clipping in Lester A. Miller, comp., scrapbook series “Reminiscences of Woodstock”, vol.1, p.116, Box A20, BFA. The porch was probably a later addition, as was the large wing on the left. No documentation on the appearance of the house during the Marsh family’s tenure there has survived.

<sup>35</sup> The rear barn and wagon bay are visible in the 1839 woodcut of the house, “Female High School, Woodstock, Vermont,” advertisement run by Rev. B. C. C. Parker, dated 1 October 1839; a map of c.1859 shows these buildings connected to the main house. Presdee & Edwards, Map of Woodstock, c.1859.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas C. Hubka, *Big House, Little House, Back House, Barn* (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1984), 6. Connected farm barns did not become prevalent in New England until the second half of the nineteenth century.

<sup>37</sup> Dana, 194.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* This house was probably built prior to construction of the new brick house in 1805 because, after this time, Marsh could have simply given the old frame house over to tenant use.

<sup>39</sup> Advertisement for the “Female High School, Woodstock, Vermont” run by Rev. B. C. C. Parker, dated 1 October, 1839.

<sup>40</sup> “Vermont Historic Preservation Plan: Agriculture Theme,” Historic Context: Diversified and Specialty Agriculture 1760-1940 (Montpelier: Unpublished document by the Division for Historic Preservation, version 8 March 1989), 2.

<sup>41</sup> Dana, 553.

<sup>42</sup> “Vermont Historic Preservation Plan,” 3.

<sup>43</sup> *Vermont Standard*, 6 June 1878.

<sup>44</sup> There may have been another entrance to the house from the north side, mirroring the one on the south. No illustrations of the north side of the house are known to exist.

<sup>45</sup> Photograph of the south facade of the Marsh house by Henry Cushing, c.1865, WHS; Panoramic photograph of the Marsh place showing the south and east facades of the Marsh House, c.1865, WHS.

<sup>46</sup> This orthogonal system of lanes is first documented on an 1855 map of Woodstock by Hosea Doton. It is assumed that these drives date to the initial construction of the house in 1805-07, given that the 1814 stone wall follows the south drive.

<sup>47</sup> John A. Pratt, Survey of property sold by Charles Marsh to Rev. Parker, c.1833. BFA, Box A24. Pratt uses the term “lane” in this survey for the north drive leading up to the brick house; he indicates a “barn” at the end of the lane. “Lower barn:” Dana, 192.

<sup>48</sup> Dana describes the stone wall leading from the “old carriage barn,” 194; Charles Marsh mentioned the existence of “store houses” in an 1847 deed, Woodstock Town Land Records, Charles Marsh to Charles Marsh Jr., vol. 15, page 18, 26 May 1847.

<sup>49</sup> Dana, 194; Dana writes that Marsh had a “row of them [Lombardy poplars] set out in front of his house, a little removed from the stone wall” which ran along the south lane and on down the turnpike toward the village.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* Where Marsh planted these two rows is not known.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* Panoramic photograph of Marsh Place, c.1868, WHS.

<sup>52</sup> View from the Marsh Place toward Taftsville, c.1865, Dana, *History of Woodstock*.

<sup>53</sup> The picket fence is shown in B. C. C. Parker’s 1839 advertisement for the “Female High School;” Cushing photograph of the Marsh house, c.1865; and Panoramic

photograph of the Marsh place, c.1868. In an 1855 deed, Charles Marsh (Junior) refers to this fenced-in area as being his “farm house garden.” Woodstock Town Land Records, Charles Marsh to Trustees of Dartmouth College, vol. 18, pages 151-152, 1 October 1855.

<sup>54</sup> Woodstock Town Land Records, Charles Marsh to Rev. B. C. C. Parker, vol. 10, pages 361-62, 5 August 1834. Marsh wrote into this deed rights to the “spring of water appearing above ground, in the northerly part of said lot hereby conveyed [tenant house lot adjoining the old Marsh house]. . . . To take water therefrom, and to dig out and stone up a well where the said water first appears above ground, and to dig from thence a ditch and lay down pipes . . . on to my own land or enclosure.”

<sup>55</sup> Dana, 194. A dot, presumably the well, is shown on the grounds in Presdee & Edwards, Map of Woodstock, c.1859; Woodstock Town Records, Charles Marsh to Bushrod W. Rice, vol. 9, page 352, 8 August 1829.

<sup>56</sup> Woodstock Town Land Records, Charles Marsh to Bushrod W. Rice, vol. 9, pages 352-53, 8 August 1829; Bushrod W. Rice to B. C. C. Parker, vol. 10, pages 190-91, 20 April 1833; Charles Marsh to B. C. C. Parker, vol. 10, pages 361-62, 5 August 1834. Survey of Rice parcel by John Pratt, 1829, BFA.

<sup>57</sup> “Female High School, Woodstock, Vermont,” advertisement run by B. C. C. Parker, dated 1 October 1839.

<sup>58</sup> Dana, 79; Presdee & Edwards Map of Woodstock, c.1859.

<sup>59</sup> Dana, 195.

<sup>60</sup> Windsor County Agricultural Society, “Windsor County Fair Premium Lists,” Woodstock, 1846. BFM.

<sup>61</sup> Woodstock Town Land Records Charles Marsh (Junior) and Charles Marsh to the Trustees of Dartmouth College, vol. 15, page 157, 10 December 1847.

<sup>62</sup> Survey of the Marsh property, “Forty Rods to an Inch,” undated, c.1840 [pre 1855; Fairgrounds not yet subdivided], Drawer 8, BFA.

<sup>63</sup> U. S. Census of 1850, cited in Madison, “Models and Morals,” 5. There is a discrepancy between the census figure of 400 acres and the actual size of the Marsh farm of 300 acres, as conveyed from Charles Marsh to Charles Marsh (Junior) in 1847. Woodstock Town Land Records,

vol. 15, page 18, Charles Marsh to Charles Marsh Jr., 26 May 1847.

<sup>64</sup> “Copy of a Map of Woodstock in 1832” (Drawn by a Committee from the Woodstock Institute. New York: Reproduced by Struthers & Co., Engineers, no date; Reprinted in the inside cover of Dana, *History of Woodstock*). Although most buildings on the map were represented by small squares, the house of “Hon. C. Marsh” was indicated by a relatively large drawing of a house.

<sup>65</sup> Dana, 193.

<sup>66</sup> Woodstock Town Land Records, Charles Marsh to Charles Marsh Jr., vol. 15, page 18, 26 May 1847. The record of the Marsh Place consisting of about 300 acres is not consistent with the 1850 Census record of 400 acres; perhaps Charles Marsh owned additional property in Woodstock that he did not convey to his son.

<sup>67</sup> Dana, 468-69.

<sup>68</sup> Klyza and Trombulak, 69-71.

<sup>69</sup> Vermont Agricultural Census, 1850-1860, cited in “Cultural Landscape Report for the Forest, 23; U.S. Census of 1850 and 1860 cited in Madison, “Models and Morals,” 5. <sup>70</sup> U. S. Census of 1860, cited in Madison, “Models and Morals,” 5. No information has been found on what Marsh farmed during the 1860s; the 1870 census probably recorded conditions at the time Frederick Billings acquired the farm in 1869-1870.

<sup>71</sup> Woodstock Town Land Records, Charles Marsh to Trustees of Dartmouth College, vol. 18, pages 151-52, 1 October 1855. In 1847, Charles Marsh (Junior) and his father sold a 50-acre parcel in the same general location to the Trustees of Dartmouth College, but this sale apparently did not hold. See Woodstock Town Land Records, Charles Marsh (Junior) and Charles Marsh to Trustees of Dartmouth College, vol. 15, page 157, 10 December 1847.

<sup>72</sup> Woodstock Town Land Records, Charles Marsh to Frederick Billings, vol. 23, pages 358-59, 17 March 1869.

<sup>73</sup> Presdee & Edwards, Map of Woodstock, c.1859; photograph of Charles Marsh House, south front, from a stereograph by Henry Cushing, c.1869; and two panoramic photographs of the Marsh Place in spring and winter, c.1869. WHS. Charles Marsh apparently had these

photographs taken on the eve of his sale of the farm to Frederick Billings.

<sup>74</sup> Woodstock Town Land Records, Charles Marsh to Trustees of Dartmouth College (fairgrounds), vol. 18, pages 151-52, 1 October 1855.

<sup>75</sup> Woodstock Town Land Records, Frances Parker to Charles Marsh, vol. 19, pages 398-399, 15 August 1859.

<sup>76</sup> Field notes by Berger in 1888 (maps and plans files, BFA) document the “old road” and “new road” in and near the upper pasture [present Upper Meadow], suggesting that the Marsh-period mountain road ran from the Marsh House across the Upper Meadow. In 1872, Julia Billings remarked that she “took a walk in our woods by the new road & home by the old & the hot house.” This passage also suggests that the current main carriage road past the Woodshed was the “new road” and the one that ran past the “hothouse” (Belvedere) was the “old” one. Diary of Julia Parmlly Billings, 12 October 1872, BFA.

<sup>77</sup> Advertisement listing items for sale by Charles Marsh, including a lumber sleigh and maple sugaring implements. *Vermont Standard*, 1 April 1869.

<sup>78</sup> Marsh’s financial difficulty is suggested by his mortgage of the old Marsh house (former Parker property) in June 1867 for \$830.00 *Vermont Standard*, 4 March 1869; Woodstock Town Land Records, mortgage deed, Charles Marsh to Ottauquechee Savings Bank, 13 June 1867, vol. 22, page 571.

<sup>79</sup> Dana, 470.

# Cultural Landscape Report for the Mansion Grounds

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park

## The Marsh Place 1789-1869



**National Park Service  
Olmsted Center for  
Landscape Preservation**

99 Warren Street, Brookline, MA

in cooperation with:

Faculty of Landscape Architecture  
SUNY College of Environmental  
Science and Forestry  
Syracuse, New York

### SOURCES

Estate of Frederick Billings, maps  
1 & 2 (Doton et al., 1887-88)  
Presdee & Edwards, Map of  
Woodstock (c.1859)  
Topo. Plan Mansion Grounds  
(Bruno, 2001)

### DRAWN BY

John Auwaerter  
Illustrator 10, 2004

### LEGEND

- Added during period
- Assumed feature
- Removed during period
- 10' contour
- Intermittent stream
- Deciduous woods
- Conifer tree/shrub
- Deciduous tree/shrub
- Unpaved road/path
- Rock outcropping
- Stone wall
- Fence/gate

### NOTES

All vegetation shown in approximate scale and location. Names indicated are those used during the period, when known. Plan illustrates conditions in 1869.



Figure 2.18

### III. THE FREDERICK BILLINGS ERA, 1869-1890

When Frederick Billings purchased the Marsh Place in February 1869, the transaction marked his permanent return from the West to his childhood home of Woodstock, Vermont.<sup>1</sup> Over the course of the next two decades, Frederick Billings transformed “The Hill,” as the family called the old Marsh Place, into a fashionable country place and model farm that served as his family home, a retreat from business affairs in New York City, and a place to manifest ideals about the land and rural society. Here, Billings practiced the type of conservation that George Perkins Marsh wrote about in *Man and Nature*: reforesting worn-out agricultural land, and enhancing soils to sustain the land’s productivity as a model for Vermont farmers. Within the Mansion grounds, Frederick Billings created an idealized rural landscape that embodied picturesque romanticism as well as scientific principles of conservation, reflecting the close relationship between aesthetics and environmental sustainability in American conservation of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

#### FREDERICK BILLINGS OF WOODSTOCK, VERMONT

Frederick Billings was born on September 27, 1823, in Royalton, Vermont, a small town on the White River about 15 miles north of Woodstock. His father Oel Billings was a farmer and a merchant, and represented Royalton in the state legislature in 1825. By 1835, financial debt forced him to sell the farm and move with his family of nine to Woodstock, Windsor County’s shire town and a bustling village of about 3,250 people, the fifth largest in the state.<sup>2</sup>

Frederick enrolled in several schools in Woodstock, where he was a classmate of Charles Marsh (Junior), but in 1838 he settled on Kimball Union Academy, a private school in New Hampshire. From there, Frederick went on to the University of Vermont in Burlington in 1840, where George Perkins Marsh and the Vermont naturalist Zadock Thompson were intellectual forces. Following

graduation, Frederick went to study law in Montpelier, the state capital, and in 1846 was appointed Secretary of Civil and Military Affairs. With changes in political fortunes, 26-year old Frederick Billings left state service. Vermont at the time offered him little opportunity, so he headed west to California in 1849 with his sister Laura. He established



Figure 3.1: Photograph of Billings family by E. R. Gates, 1884. From left to right, standing: Mary Montagu, Frederick, Julia, and Parmly; sitting: Elizabeth, Richard, Ehrick, Fritz, and Laura. Billings Family Archives.

himself in San Francisco, the center of the booming Gold Rush, and became the first American to practice law in that city. He quickly built up his fortune and prominence with investments in real estate, land-claim settlements, and cultivation of social and political connections. Through the 1850s, Billings was busy with his law practice and with several large, controversial land development projects in California. He enjoyed his work in California, and also took a keen interest in the state’s natural wonders, such as Yosemite and the Mariposa Big Trees. His experience in the West not only made him a rich man, but also gave him new appreciation for nature and landscape.

During his years in California, Frederick Billings made the long trip back to Woodstock only a few times. During the Civil War, he went to New York City and became acquainted with Julia Parmly, daughter of a wealthy, prominent New York City family. On March 31, 1862, the couple married and, after a brief return to California, settled in New York City, where Frederick found work in the railroad industry. In November 1863, he and Julia traveled to Woodstock to visit the Billings family, and there they took a walk up to the Pogue at the Marsh Place; it was Julia's first visit to the property that would later become her home.<sup>3</sup> Within a short time, Frederick and Julia decided to move their family to Woodstock, fulfilling a pastoral ideal increasingly evident in American culture.

Although Julia's family was in New York City and Frederick's work was there, too, the couple decided to make Woodstock—over 250 miles away—their permanent home. While he remained indecisive over their decision to leave the West, he discovered that Woodstock was his spiritual home.<sup>4</sup> After decades as a transcontinental businessman and with a growing family and wavering health, Billings longed to reconnect with his Vermont roots, where he saw the opportunity to make a substantial contribution to the improvement of the languishing countryside. Woodstock fit well within the American ideal of country living for a young, wealthy family, although its distance from Frederick's work in New York City and its harsh winters proved less than ideal, especially for Julia. Because Frederick had to spend so much time away, Julia carried much of the burden of raising their seven children: Parmly, the eldest, born in 1863 in San Francisco, and another six, all born in Woodstock: Laura in 1864, Frederick Jr. ("Fritz") in 1866, Mary Montagu in 1869, Elizabeth in 1871, Ehrick in 1872, and Richard in 1875.<sup>5</sup> [Figure 3.1; Billings family tree, Appendix B] Due in part to isolation and winter conditions, the family soon began to use Woodstock as a seasonal home instead of a year-round residence. In 1881, Frederick Billings finally purchased a winter home for the family in New York City.

During the 1870s, Frederick Billings gained a powerful position in the Northern Pacific Railroad, a company con-

sidered by historians to be the single greatest American corporate undertaking of the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> He bought his first stock in the company in 1869, the same year he purchased the Marsh Place, and the following year he was appointed to the Northern Pacific Board of Directors. By 1873, he had risen to become president of the company and stayed in that office, located in New York City, for over seven years. During his presidency, Billings oversaw reorganization of the Northern Pacific and reform of its land development operation that secured the company's survival. While the stress of his work caused Billings persistent health problems including depression and frequent bouts of heartburn, he found respite in the improvement of his Woodstock home, much of which he developed by 1875. Billings remained president of the Northern Pacific until 1881, when Henry Villard orchestrated a hostile takeover.

After he lost the presidency, Billings turned his attention with renewed vigor toward improving the Woodstock home. Yet he remained depressed and aware that his life was coming to an end.<sup>7</sup> He would, however, continue his program of improvements through the late 1880s. The tragic deaths of two of his sons—Parmly in 1888 at age twenty-five, and Ehrick in 1889 at age sixteen—hit him hard, and in December 1889 he suffered a debilitating stroke. The next May, the family moved to Woodstock for the season, and the invalid Billings knew it was probably his last visit. In Woodstock on September 30, 1890, Frederick Billings died in his sleep, a week after his sixty-seventh birthday.

From his early success with law and real estate in California, Frederick Billings had become a rich man through his assets in the Northern Pacific Railroad and real estate in Wisconsin, Montana, Minnesota, Missouri, and North and South Dakota, as well as his two homes in New York City and Woodstock. Together, estimates of his total worth at the time of his death was around twenty million dollars, certainly a large sum, but not a great fortune compared with some of the railroad barons of the era.<sup>8</sup> Over the years, Billings used his wealth in a way that reflected his great sense of responsibility toward society. He had



striven to be a good steward of his wealth, and to leave behind resources that could continue to benefit his family and society. Unlike many rich men of his time, Frederick Billings extended his sense of responsibility to include conservation of the land and its natural resources. It was at his Woodstock estate that he would clearly manifest this important ideal.

### **FREDERICK BILLINGS, CONSERVATION PRACTITIONER**

Frederick Billings's development of his model farm and country place in Woodstock occurred at the very beginning of the conservation movement in America, reflecting the ideal of a productive and sustainable relationship between people and the land such as had been advocated by George Perkins Marsh in his seminal work, *Man and Nature*. Billings practiced a conservation philosophy that also reflected his interest in scientific farming as well as his own romantic appreciation of landscape stemming from his contact with the sublime natural wonders in the West and the beautiful Vermont countryside of his youth.

Early conservationists such as Frederick Billings understood that one of nature's greatest benefits was its ability to inspire and uplift. In the mid nineteenth century, this benefit was often perceived in American culture through the lens of a picturesque romanticism that was influenced by the work of Hudson River School artists who framed America's wild and rural landscapes, as well as Transcendentalist writers who valued the spiritual benefit of raw nature. American landscape gardeners also added to the country's growing romanticism toward landscape in the design of pastoral country residences that provided an idealized rural scene far removed from the plight of increasingly unhealthy industrial cities. Andrew Jackson Downing, one of the most popular of nineteenth century American landscape gardeners, wrote in an 1841 treatise: "The development of the Beautiful is the end aim of Landscape Gardening . . . The embellishment of nature, which we call Landscape Gardening, springs naturally from a love of country life, an attachment to a certain spot,

and a desire to render that place attractive—a feeling which seems more or less strongly fixed in the minds of all men."<sup>9</sup> The importance of landscape beauty was not, however, just a romantic impulse. Many advocates of scientific farming, who stressed the importance of improving agricultural production, viewed beauty as an indicator of the prosperity of rural society. Scientific farmer and landscape gardener Robert Morris Copeland, whom Frederick Billings would one day employ at his Woodstock estate, wrote of the close relationship between "the Beautiful" and the advancement of agriculture in his 1859 treatise, *Country Life: A Handbook of Agriculture, Horticulture, And Landscape Gardening*.<sup>10</sup>

Although he would one day collect Hudson River School paintings and develop his own landscape garden and scientific farm, the unparalleled natural wonders of the West were probably most responsible for awakening Frederick Billings's instinctual appreciation of landscape beauty. He was one of the first Easterners to see the awe-inspiring Yosemite Valley; when the noted photographer Carleton E. Watkins photographed Yosemite in c.1861, Billings obtained a set of his prints. [Figure 3.2] His appreciation of this landscape was also heightened by the threat of its demise. Although Billings shared the popular nineteenth-century American belief that nature, with its seemingly limitless resources, existed for the service of humankind, he had witnessed, during his experience in the mining and timber industries in Gold-Rush California, the rapid destruction of natural beauty.<sup>11</sup> After little more than a year in California, he was writing home of the need to preserve the region's natural wonders, arguing that places of great natural beauty like Yosemite could be conserved while still benefiting society economically through less damaging development such as tourism.<sup>12</sup>

When Frederick Billings returned to Vermont in the 1860s, he rediscovered the beauty of the familiar rural landscape of his youth. Although not inspiring awe as did the landscapes of the West, its forested hills, fertile valleys, and little villages, were nonetheless inspiring, and Frederick Billings often remarked that nowhere was there a more beautiful place than Woodstock.<sup>13</sup> Yet this beautiful landscape, like the

natural wonders of California, was in trouble. Since he left Vermont in the late 1840s, agricultural development—particularly sheep farming, timber harvesting, and mining—had stripped large areas of beauty and natural resources. Large portions of the Vermont landscape were marred by eroded slopes, silted rivers, non-productive fields, and barren hills that accompanied a declining rural society marked by abandoned and deteriorating farms, and a weakened economy that supported little growth or improvement to the villages. By the 1860s, 60 percent of Vermont towns had lost population, as people left in search of economic opportunity in booming industrial cities and more fertile farming regions in the West.<sup>14</sup>



**Figure 3.2: Mirror Lake, Yosemite Valley, c.1861, by the noted photographer Carleton E. Watkins. This print was one of a set of Watkins' Yosemite photographs obtained by Frederick Billings in the 1860s. Billings Family Archives.**

As he was considering moving back to Vermont from California in the 1860s, Frederick Billings was certainly aware of the scientific farming movement and its potential to improve Vermont's declining rural society. However, scientific farming treatises such as the one by R. M. Copeland typically had a narrow focus, based on the improvement of individual farms. In 1864, Frederick Billings read the newly published *Man and Nature*, by his fellow Woodstock native George Perkins Marsh, which articulated the broad connection between decline of the landscape and decline of rural society. Marsh described environmental problems on a broad scale, focusing not just on agriculture but on all means of natural resource depletion; he also outlined solutions, such as reforestation, to reverse environmental degradation and thereby ensure society's renewal and future health. Marsh did not argue that nature should be left alone—he believed its resources should be harnessed for the human benefit. For Frederick Billings, *Man and Nature* reinforced his observations about the interconnection between society and nature, thereby providing a scientific basis to conservation.<sup>15</sup>

Frederick Billings quickly understood the practical application of Marsh's conservation philosophy, and he was soon sharing it with Vermont farmers. In September 1864,

Billings gave a speech before the Windsor County Fair in Woodstock—at Marsh's boyhood home—in which he argued that the state's eroded pastures and worn-out agricultural fields could once again be renewed through conservation practices based on scientific principles, rather than being simply abandoned to natural forces. Billings believed such practices would greatly benefit rural society, whose improvement would be manifested in the enhanced beauty of Vermont's landscape:

*Vermont is by no means finished. There is something to learn as to the capacities of the soils—as to the best types of vegetation—and the highest needs of cultivation. The orchards can be improved, the immense value of the forests is little understood, & the absolute necessity of using them and not preserving them is to be learned . . . And, what is little thought of, there is a very patent need of improvement in the style of rural architecture and its adaptation to rural scenery . . . Good taste and enlightened self interest will in time work many changes in these respects and these wooded*

*hills skirted by these fertile valleys will get rid of a good many things that do not harmonize with their beauty and take on many new features of attractive loveliness.*<sup>16</sup>

In order to teach Vermont farmers about proper land stewardship including scientific farming, forestry, rural architecture, and landscape gardening, Frederick Billings envisioned a model farm that would illustrate all these aspects. Woodstock also had the perfect place to create this model farm: the boyhood home of the conservation philosopher George Perkins Marsh, which he would return to the prominence and productivity it had enjoyed earlier in the century. At the Mansion grounds in particular, Billings would illustrate the benefits of land stewardship by transforming the second Marsh house into a model of rural architecture and its surrounding grounds into an idealized rural landscape.

### THE EARLY COUNTRY-PLACE ERA

When Frederick Billings bought the Marsh Place in 1869, he was following a growing trend among wealthy industrialists to establish second homes in the country outside bustling cities. In many ways, he was continuing the senior Charles Marsh's life, anchored both in town and country. Yet with his model farm, Billings was also following a New England tradition of establishing country homes (often called "country places") as models of rural improvement. This tradition dated back to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when the first country places appeared on the outskirts of Boston. Known as gentlemen's farms, they served both as seasonal residences and as places where agricultural and horticultural experimentation was undertaken for general benefit of rural society.<sup>17</sup> Rural improvement was not, however, the sole motivation behind establishment of these country places. The Boston elite, for example, also sought to create an identity for themselves founded on positive associations of rural pursuits in British culture among the aristocracy, gentry, and growing commercial-professional class. Country places conjured up several powerful associations,

including the moral rectitude of industry, simplicity, and thrift; and retirement from the chaos of urban life.<sup>18</sup>

Following the Civil War, the number of country places increased, spurred by the tremendous growth of wealth and associated leisure time made possible through the Industrial Revolution, as well as by the extension of railroads into scenic rural areas. Regions such as the Hudson River Valley north of New York City became favorite locations for establishing fashionable country places where families of wealth would spend whole seasons away from their primary city homes. With this trend, designing country places became a major source of work for the country's architects and landscape gardeners. This was the beginning of the so-called Country-Place Era, a period between c.1870 and 1930 when the design of country places dominated the country's burgeoning profession of landscape architecture.<sup>19</sup>

The early years of the Country-Place Era through the mid 1890s coincided with a period in American design that has been termed by the historian Lewis Mumford, "The Brown Decades," referring to the dominant use of dark colors and natural materials such as wood, brick, and brownstone.<sup>20</sup> The tragedy of the Civil War, a growing reaction against industrialization, the writings of Thoreau and other Transcendentalists, the conservation philosophy of Marsh, and the work of Frederick Law Olmsted brought about an increased appreciation for nature and a desire to reach back to preindustrial traditions. Architecture and interior design looked back romantically to organic medieval and early Renaissance styles such as the Romanesque, Gothic, and Queen Anne, which exhibited exuberant naturalistic detail and materials, muted colors, and irregular massing. [Figure 3.3] In the landscape, such design blended in with the natural environment, much as Frederick Billings had recommended in his speech to the Windsor County Fair. Landscape design at country places during the Brown Decades followed a similar romantic view, generally reflecting an idealized rural past.

At the time Frederick Billings purchased the Marsh Place in 1869, landscape design was based in large part on the

eighteenth-century tradition of English landscape gardening developed for country estates by designers such as Capability Brown and Humphrey Repton. For an increasingly industrialized and urbanized country preoccupied with a pastoral ideal, the English or Natural style as it was known became especially appropriate for the United States. The style embodied a romantic, idealized countryside represented by beautiful sweeping lawns, curving drives, and clumps of trees. Whereas earlier landscape design focused on strict geometry and enclosed spaces adjoining a house, such as was evident in the fenced-in garden and orthogonal lanes around the Marsh house, the mid-century aesthetic was for gardens that were open, naturalistic, and romantic, with views of the surrounding countryside. As the garden historian Christine Doell has remarked, “It was almost as if nineteenth-century homeowners looked beyond their garden gate to discover a natural order to the landscape which had previously gone unnoticed. From then on, the goal of landscape gardening

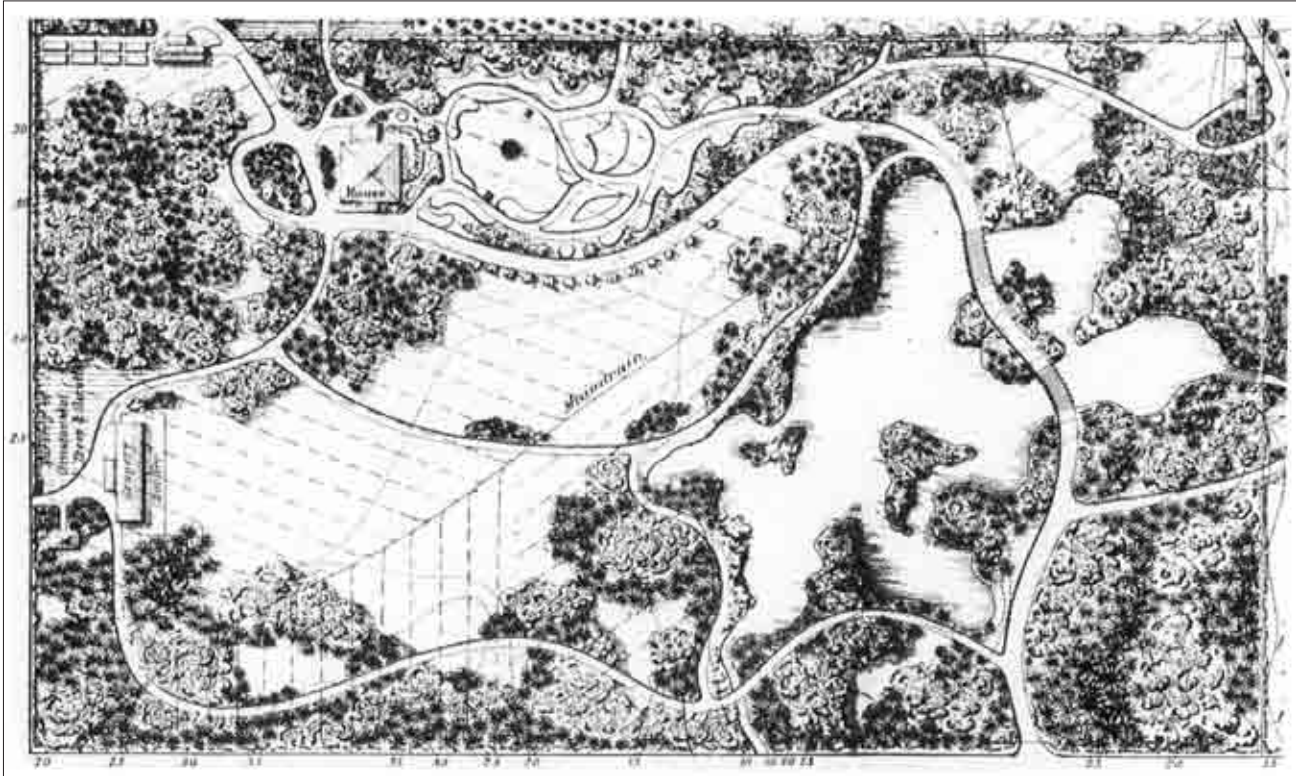
was to improve the inherent capabilities of the site itself, rather than to impose an artificial order upon it.”<sup>21</sup>

In the United States, the Natural style of landscape gardening was initially popularized by the landscape gardener Andrew Jackson Downing through his 1841 publication, *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening, Adapted to North America; with a View to the Improvement of Country Residences*. Robert Morris Copeland, in his 1859 treatise *Country Life*, followed the same style. [Figure 3.4] In addition to the sweeping lawns, curving drives, and clumps of trees that represented an idealized rural scene recognized as embodying “the Beautiful,” American landscape gardeners such as Downing also incorporated sublime features into the design of country places, reflecting interest in America’s wilderness popularized by the Hudson River School of painters and others. Landscape features such as spiky evergreens (the Norway spruce was a favorite), craggy outcroppings, and rustic architecture (including twig, Gothic and Swiss styles) were meant to conjure up association with the untamed side of nature. Frederick and Julia Billings had first-hand experience of, and frequently visited, one of the preeminent American examples of landscape design of the mid nineteenth century that combined both beautiful and sublime characteristics: Olmsted and Vaux’s Central Park in New York City.<sup>22</sup>

**Figure 3.3: Example of Queen Anne-style architecture, typical of design during the so-called Brown Decades. Henry Hudson Holly, *Modern Dwellings*. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1878), 98.**



In the late nineteenth century, the Natural style was often fancied up with overlays of ornate garden features in the Gardenesque style, reflecting Victorian tastes for ornament and detail as well as the discovery and widespread availability of tropical flowering plants from South America and the American Southwest.<sup>23</sup> A fashionable feature of the Gardenesque was “carpet-bedding” or “bedding-out,” based on the precedent of the formal French parterre. Bedding-out was characterized by showy lawn beds planted with a wide array of colorful annuals, often in imitation of Oriental carpets, ribbons, and fountains. These beds were typically placed close to the house and were meant to draw attention and provide a level of detail that bridged nature and architecture. The plantings were sometimes punctuated by vertical features,



such as vases or spiky plants. [Figure 3.5] Popular bedding plants included canna, salvia, coleus, centaurea, and lobelia, among many others. The popularity of bedding-out corresponded with the appearance of greenhouses on country places, in which the tender plants could be forced in time to produce bedding displays during the temperate growing season.

Another related trend in landscape design in the late nineteenth century was the so-called Subtropical Movement, characterized by interest in tropical foliage plants and in the building of conservatories where complete subtropical landscapes could be created.<sup>24</sup> Large, potted tropical foliage plants became fashionable components of formal lawns, supplementing bedding displays and providing a sense of nature's exotic diversity to the landscape. These potted plants were typically set out from tropical displays in conservatories, where they would be overwintered.

Figure 3.4: An American example of the English or Natural style of landscape gardening. Detail, "A Plan for Laying Out a Country Place," by R. Morris Copeland, published in *Country Life* (Boston: Jewett & Co., 1859), frontispiece. Copeland would design the Mansion grounds in 1869.

Figure 3.5: An elaborate example of "bedding-out." Elias Long, *Ornamental Gardening for Americans* (New York: Orange Judd, 1884), 214.

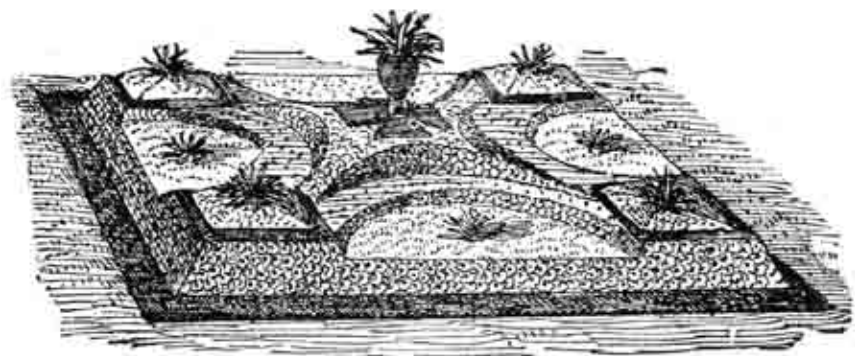
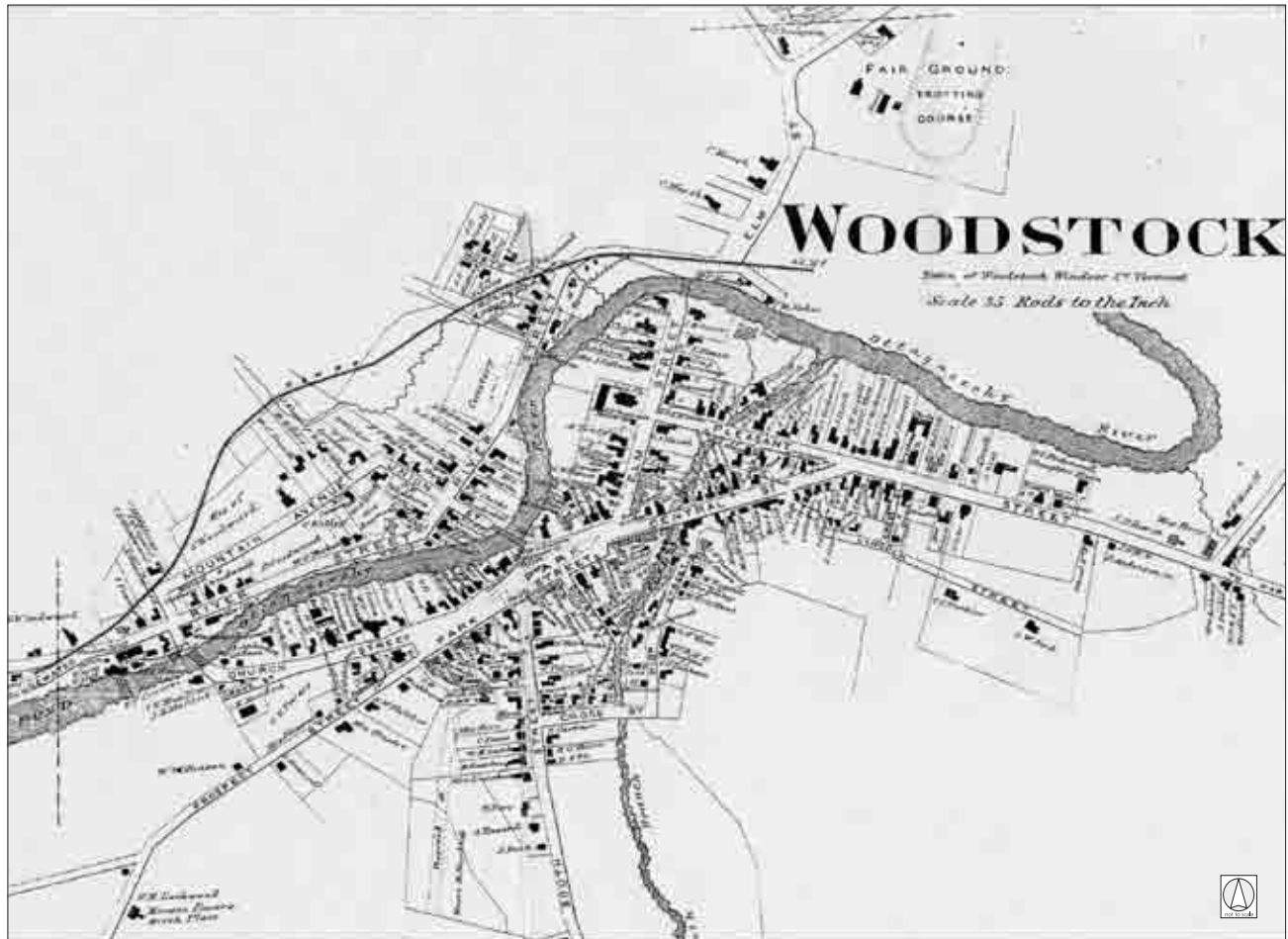


Fig. 61.—AN ELABORATE, ELEVATED BED.



In contrast to the ornate and exotic displays of bedding-out and tropical foliage, there was also a growing interest by the late 1860s and 1870s in more irregular and naturalistic garden plantings that paralleled the movement in decorative arts and interior design known as the Aesthetic Movement. Aesthetic design was characterized by interest in natural forms and colors, asymmetry, and informality, with stylized plant material often serving as design motifs in architectural details and interior finishes. Aesthetic sensibilities led to renewed appreciation for what were called “old-fashioned” gardens, which looked back to colonial-era farmhouse gardens characterized by an informal variety of plant materials, including perennials such as hollyhocks, foxglove, and phlox; vines and climbing roses; and shrubs which were allowed to assume their natural form. Interest in old-fashioned gardens increased following the country’s centennial celebration in 1876, which awakened popular interest in the nation’s past.<sup>25</sup>

Figure 3.6: Woodstock village in c.1869. *Atlas of Windsor County* (F. W. Beers, c.1869). The Marsh Place, with its characteristic orthogonal lanes, is depicted on Elm Street north of the Ottauquechee River; the railroad was only proposed at the time.

### WOODSTOCK IN THE EARLY COUNTRY-PLACE ERA

Although Frederick Billings employed fashionable landscape design styles of the day, his Woodstock estate would not be an altogether typical country place. Aside from his progressive conservation practices, a major reason was its physical location in Woodstock, far from Billings’s work in New York City and outside the sphere of country-place society. In 1869, there were few, if any, seasonal homes in Woodstock of the elite from New York City or Boston, or from even closer, smaller industrial cities in New York State and New England. Woodstock was a sleepy village of 2,910 (down from its height of

3,315 in 1840) in the center of a declining agricultural region. It was not at the time connected to the region's railroad infrastructure, and would not be so until completion of the short-line Woodstock Railroad in 1875. There was little industry and the village had not expanded beyond the Ottauquechee River to the northeast, preserving its rural setting with farms such as the Marsh Place within sight of the town center.<sup>26</sup>



Figure 3.7: View west across Woodstock Green from the corner of Central and Elm Streets, c.1865. Woodstock Historical Society.

[Figure 3.6] The character of the village from its heyday in the 1820s and 1830s also remained largely intact, with many original Federal and Greek Revival buildings. [Figure 3.7] In 1864, prior to his purchase of the Marsh Place, Frederick Billings spoke of Woodstock as a desirable location for country places, even prophesizing the tourism industry of the twentieth century:

*Certainly the time is not far off when the people who come to Vermont to dwell in summer homes of their own or homes of others, from the month of May to the month of November, will be counted by the thousands. As the population of our country increases and wealth affords the means of gratifying cost & comfort, the dwellers in cities by the shores of the sea, the dwellers in the dull & monotonous plains of the west, the dwellers in the heated and miasmatic regions of the south—the seekers after health, the lovers of nature, the tired who wish for quiet rest, perhaps now & then a returned Californian—will gravitate more than anywhere else to this north part of New England, to these regions of health and picturesque beauty, to these hills and mountains and limpid streams and silvan rills, In deeper forests, now so many hued & gorgeous colored . . .*<sup>27</sup>

At the time of Frederick Billings' speech, there were few country places in Vermont, where tourism was limited to widely scattered spas and hotels, such as the Equinox House in Manchester. By the 1870s, however, country places began to appear in and around southern Vermont villages due to the proximity to industrial cities in New York State. One such village was Bennington Center (later renamed Old Bennington), a rural, old-fashioned town favored by lawyers, bankers, and industrialists from nearby Troy, New York. Most of these people who summered in Bennington Center had family connections to the area and, like Frederick Billings, had moved away for economic opportunity.<sup>28</sup> Interest in Bennington Center and many other old New England villages also increased during the 1870s due to the national centennial, which popularized places from the nation's early, pre-industrial past.

Woodstock shared many of the physical characteristics of Bennington Center, but apparently due to its more isolated location, few chose to establish country places there until the late 1880s. At this time, several country places were built in "Sunny Side," a stretch of farmland east of



the Billings Estate along River Road adjoining the Ottauquechee River. J. Foster Rhodes, a prominent Chicago businessman, was one of the first seasonal residents to settle in Sunny Side when he purchased and renovated the Cushing farm in c.1887. Frederick Billings, hoping to fulfill his prophesy in his 1864 speech at the Windsor County Fair, assisted in the development of Sunny Side by extending his gas line so that, as the local newspaper reported, “in the future when Sunny Side is lined with elegant summer homes the dwellers there may enjoy gas and water with the other delights in store for them. Speed the time!”<sup>29</sup> Billings probably hoped that such country places would help to further improve the rural economy and appearance of Woodstock.

Frederick Billings’s investment into the infrastructure of Sunny Side was only one example of his many philanthropic contributions to the Woodstock community, many of which helped to sustain the village’s economy and social institutions. Foremost among his contributions was

**Figure 3.8: The Elm Street Bridge, built in 1869, view north toward the Mansion grounds, c.1874. Courtesy Jane McDill Smith, Woodstock, Vermont. The Mansion is at the upper right of the photograph. The two boys on the bridge are unidentified.**

the economic impact of his model farm, which employed many area residents and gave significant business to area merchants. More direct examples included his financial assistance to the town for rebuilding in 1869 the Elm Street Bridge—located on the approach to the Mansion grounds from the village over the Ottauquechee River—replacing the old structure with a modern iron bowstring—truss bridge.<sup>30</sup> [Figure 3.8] In the 1880s, he funded the addition of a chapel to the Congregational Church on Elm Street, dedicating the gift to the memory of his parents; later in the decade he paid for the renovation of the entire church. He also underwrote Henry Swan Dana’s writing and publication of a comprehensive history of the town. He contributed to the welfare of other institutions and communities in the state, notably his gift of George Perkins Marsh’s library to University of Vermont in 1882, complete with a major building to house it



designed by the noted architect H. H. Richardson. Such philanthropy was both a reflection of Billings's social obligations of the period as a man of wealth, and an extension of his conservation philosophy.

### **TRANSFORMATION OF THE MARSH PLACE, 1869-1881**

The years following 1869 were a busy time at the north end of Elm Street, where Woodstock watched the familiar old Marsh Place, a landscape that had seen little change over the previous six decades, being transformed into a fashionable model farm and country place. Over the course of the 1870s, Frederick Billings established the general character of the Mansion grounds—the buildings, tree plantings, lawns, and gardens—that would persist for much of its subsequent history.<sup>31</sup>

#### **Purchase of the Marsh Place**

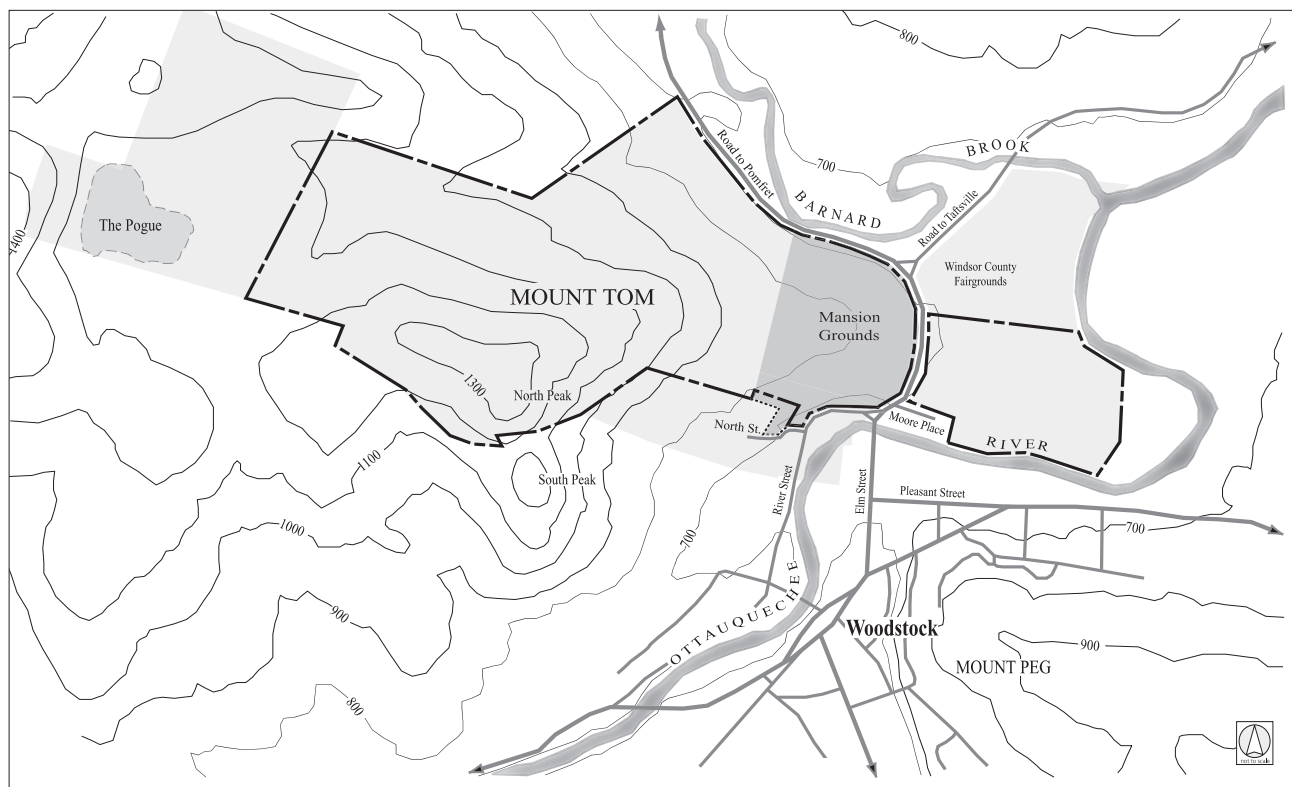
In the late 1860s, when Frederick Billings was looking for property in Woodstock to establish the family home and model farm, the Marsh Place must have been foremost in his mind. The property, which stood as in the days of his youth so prominently at the head of Elm Street, featured not only the best farmland in the village, but also the summit of Mount Tom with its panoramic views. As the boyhood home of George Perkins Marsh, it also boasted a pedigree, and provided Billings—the transcontinental businessman—with a sense of legitimacy, stability, and connection with the past. Yet compared with its appearance during Billings's youth, the Marsh Place probably looked quite faded, given the lack of improvements over the course of the two decades of ownership by the junior Charles Marsh. To Frederick Billings, the Marsh Place may have reflected the larger decline of rural society. Despite this, the property still reflected, as Billings biographer Robin Winks has noted, “a moral landscape that represented the old Vermont virtues of thrift, good craftsmanship, and success handsomely but not vulgarly expressed.”<sup>32</sup> To preserve these virtues and at the same time to return the property to the stature it had possessed

during its heyday were probably the main goals that Billings had in mind. He also hoped to illustrate to George Perkins Marsh the manifestation of his conservation philosophy, should the great statesman return to visit his boyhood home from Italy where he was serving as American ambassador.<sup>33</sup>

By February 15, 1869, Frederick Billings was close to finalizing his purchase; his wife Julia was reading Marsh's *Man and Nature*, perhaps better to understand the property on which the author was raised. On February 24, she entered in her diary: “[Frederick] told me he had bought the Marsh farm—Papers to be made out on the morrow.”<sup>34</sup> The same day, Frederick drew up the financial arrangements with Charles Marsh for purchase of his entire farm of 246.6 acres for \$27,500. [Figure 3.9] On March 17, 1869, the deed for the sale was entered into Woodstock records.<sup>35</sup>

While Billings was finalizing his purchase of the property, the community was reading about his extensive plans for the estate. On March 4, 1869, the *Vermont Standard* noted, “Mr. Billings will make additions to and improvements in the buildings and grounds, and when his work is completed we venture to say that Vermont will be able to show few more desirably beautiful residences.”<sup>36</sup> His plans would involve three connected portions of the estate: the residential area comprising the Mansion grounds at the foot of Mount Tom, the main farm occupying the Ottauquechee River intervalle, and the pastures and woodlots on Mount Tom. Although he was becoming increasingly involved in his work with the Northern Pacific Railroad in New York City, Frederick Billings was able to devote significant time to his estate in Woodstock prior to becoming president of the railroad in 1873.<sup>37</sup> He remained, in general, intimately involved with the implementation of his plans down to the smallest details, and relied on a variety of sources for planning his improvements, including both self-help treatises and professional designers.<sup>38</sup>

Frederick Billings began his earliest improvements at the Mansion grounds and farm, with work on reforestation and expansion of the property following soon after. Under the supervision of George Weston—his hired farm



**Figure 3.9: Property purchased by Frederick Billings from Charles Marsh (Junior) in 1869, showing additional land (marked by dotted line) acquired within the Mansion grounds by 1872, based on Doton survey of 1887–1888, Billings Family Archives. SUNY ESF. The area shaded in light gray indicates the former extent of the Marsh Place, c. 1847.**

manager—and with a substantial work force made up largely of area farmers, Billings instituted deep plowing and heavy manuring to sustain the productivity of the fields, and shifted the farm from a reliance on sheep to a mixed livestock operation of Jersey dairy cows, Southdown sheep, and Berkshire pigs.<sup>39</sup> On the old upland sheep pastures just west of the Mansion, Billings instituted an innovative reforestation program. These forests, which he would extend across Mount Tom in subsequent years, would not only help to conserve the soils and improve drainage, but would also yield timber products and maple sugar, while enhancing the recreational value and aesthetic character of the landscape.

Between 1869 and 1875, Billings acquired an additional eleven lots that increased the size of his property to nearly four hundred acres.<sup>40</sup> All of the present Mansion grounds were included in the original 1869 transaction, except for two small parcels at the southwestern corner of the grounds adjoining North Street, both of which had been earlier subdivided from the Marsh Place. One lot was a small half-acre strip that Billings acquired from Nathan and Arriette Claflin on April 1, 1869 for \$200. The second

lot was three-quarters of an acre and contained a house, once owned by the Claflins, which fronted on North Street. Billings acquired this property from William T. Washburn on September 12, 1872 for \$1,500.<sup>41</sup> [Figure 3.9] Billings used the house as a staff residence for the head gardener of the Mansion grounds.

### **The Copeland Plan for the Mansion Grounds**

For development of his residential landscape, Frederick Billings left little to chance. In the tradition of eighteenth-century English country estates and the more recent American tradition of landscape gardening advocated by Andrew Jackson Downing, Billings commissioned the Boston landscape gardener, Robert Morris Copeland to prepare a conceptual plan of the Mansion grounds.

Copeland (1830–1874) grew up in Roxbury, Massachusetts, and attended Harvard College in the late 1840s, during which time he was influenced by Transcendentalist philosophies regarding man’s spiritual need to transcend the material world and, by extension, urban culture. By the 1850s, Copeland had withdrawn to his own farm, where he practiced scientific agriculture. In 1859, he published his treatise, *Country Life: A Handbook of Agriculture, Horticulture, and Landscape Gardening*.<sup>42</sup> By this time, Copeland had spent five years practicing both landscape gardening and scientific agriculture through a partnership with another landscape gardener—Horace Cleveland—that began in 1854. One of the most important commissions of the partnership’s early years was the design of Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Concord, Massachusetts, which served as a link between the village and surrounding countryside. By the time Frederick Billings commissioned his plan for the Mansion Grounds in 1869, the partnership had been dissolved for nearly ten years, and Copeland had a flourishing practice of his own. He had projects in New York, Pennsylvania, and New England ranging from country places to community designs, including the plan for the village of Oak Bluffs on Martha’s Vineyard. In the early 1870s, Copeland developed a plan for a system of connected public open spaces in Boston’s Back Bay which reflected his earlier concept at Sleepy Hollow of linking town and country.<sup>43</sup>

How Frederick Billings selected R. M. Copeland to design the Mansion grounds is not known.<sup>44</sup> Billings did, however, share his interest in scientific farming and landscape gardening, and in combining the practical with the beautiful. Such interests were reflected throughout Copeland’s *Country Life*, a copy of which Billings apparently owned by 1869:

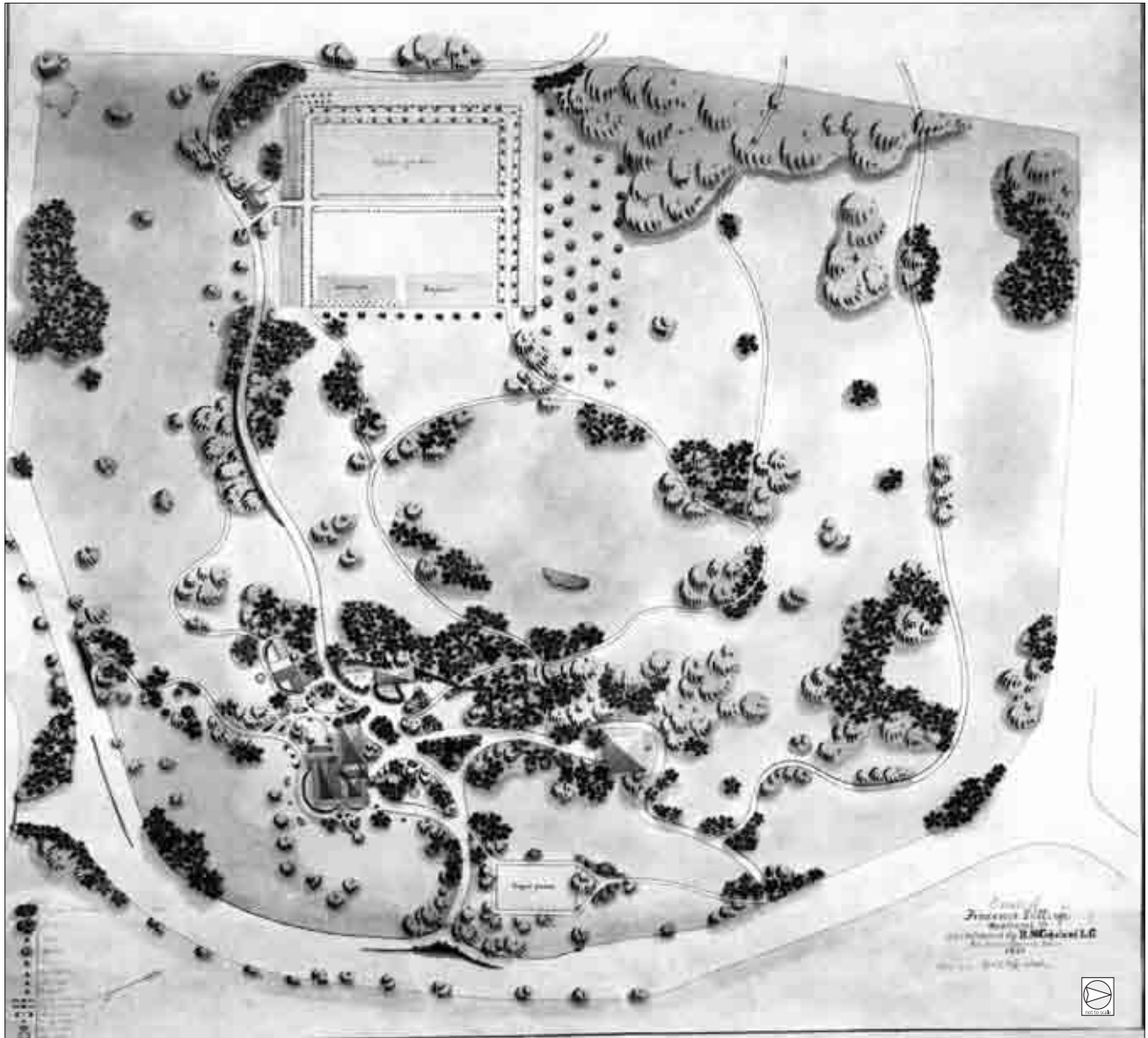
*A mere pleasure place where there is nothing for use, and all for beauty, would satisfy but few, as most persons soon weary of merely enjoying. The man of earnest mind, who gladly unbends from serious work and wanders with greatest satisfaction through lawns and flower-gardens, ultimately craves something more solid; a view of the practical part of life; a sight of the machinery*

*by which all moves smoothly and profitably. Beside the mental gratification derived from a combination of pursuits, there is almost a duty laid upon every one who makes a country home, to provide occupation as well as recreation.*<sup>45</sup>

Soon after Billings purchased the Marsh Place, Copeland produced an illustrated plan of the Mansion grounds, entitled “Estate of Frederick Billings Woodstock Vt. as improved by R. M. Copeland [Landscape Gardener] 40 Barristers Hall, Boston 1869.”<sup>46</sup> [Figures 3.10, 3.11] The plan covered about forty acres of ground extending from Elm Street (former turnpike) west across the hill at the foot of Mount Tom to the rear of the Mansion.

Copeland’s plan, which he most likely developed hand-in-hand with Billings, was quite similar to his prototypical “Plan for Laying Out A Country Place of 60 Acres,” which he included in *Country Life*<sup>47</sup> [see Figure 3.4]. Both plans reflect the idealized rural landscape of the Natural style, represented by winding drives and walks, expansive lawns, and naturalistic groupings of trees, with the Mansion as the focal point. The plan also included features that addressed the contemporary needs of a country place, including greenhouses, a laundry, stable, croquet ground, and kitchen garden. While Copeland thoroughly redesigned the Marsh Place, he was careful to preserve some features, perhaps reflecting Billings’s interest in preserving continuity with the past, much as he was doing in his reconstruction of the Marsh house, where he preserved the structural core. Although there is no indication in the plan of what features were then extant, a comparison with the grounds of the Marsh Place as they existed by 1869 indicates that Copeland retained a deciduous woodlot at the northwest corner of the grounds, an oak grove on the hillside, rock outcroppings and a boulder, and specimen trees.

One of Copeland’s general concerns in designing a landscape was to create a naturalistic appearance, even beyond what was characteristic of the Natural style. He carefully studied natural forms and the native ecology, an interest that would certainly have appealed to Frederick Billings’s



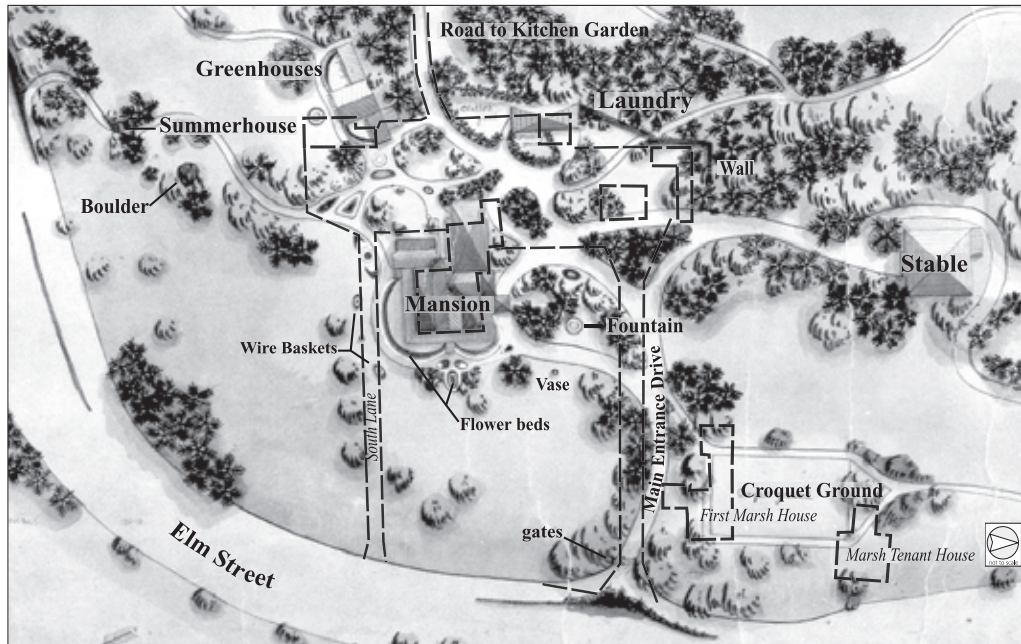
conservation sensibilities. For example, Copeland was concerned about the effect of grading on the natural character of the landscape. In *Country Life*, he wrote: “The banks about a house should not be disguised by artifice, to conceal the fact that it has been raised above the surrounding surface, but should be made to assume natural slopes, because such slopes are more pleasing to the eye, more easily made, and can be preserved at less expense.<sup>48</sup> In planting trees and shrubs, Copeland tried to mimic nature, as he wrote in *Country Life*:

*Nature seems never to fail in producing beautiful groups, whether they be looked at in winter,*

Figure 3.10: Plan for the Mansion grounds produced in 1869 by R. M. Copeland. Billings Family Archives. Elm Street is at the bottom of the plan; the large building in the left center is the Mansion. See figures 3.11 & 3.12 for details of this plan.

*summer, or autumn. In spray, in full foliage, or in autumnal coloring, her trees are always beautiful, always seem just fit for their place. It very rarely happens that any of her groups, with which man has not meddled, seem badly arranged.<sup>49</sup>*

In keeping with the Natural style of landscape design, Copeland proposed an open spatial character, organized



**Figure 3.11: Detail of the Mansion terrace in the 1869 Copeland plan. Billings Family Archives, annotated by SUNY ESF. The dashed lines indicate approximate location of Marsh-period features, based on Presdee & Edwards map of c.1859.**

around the existing viewsheds looking east from the Mansion across the intervalle and south toward the village. His design eliminated the stone-wall-enclosed pastures and fenced-in gardens, creating a sweeping lawn and permitting the landscape to flow visually to the adjoining countryside. This lawn was probably a combination of manicured and meadow-like grass, depending on its proximity to the formal areas around the Mansion.<sup>50</sup> Threading through the lawns and across the hill, Copeland proposed a series of curvilinear avenues and paths that replaced the orthogonal lanes around the Marsh house. He designed one main entrance at the location of the old north lane, and removed the south lane and rectilinear rear service yard. The new service buildings, including the Laundry and Stable, were sited within a wooded area to the rear and north of the Mansion.

Although the intent is difficult to perceive from the plan drawing, Copeland also gave portions of the landscape a sublime, picturesque quality. One such portion was at the pedestrian entrance to the grounds south of the Mansion, adjoining the steep bank of the Ottauquechee River. Here, Copeland called for a summerhouse, an open-air pavilion

subsequently constructed in the Rustic style (it is not known if Copeland specified this style), from which a winding path led up to a native boulder. Looking west from the boulder, Copeland indicated a clearing that would have provided a view of the rugged twin peaks of Mount Tom in the distance. Behind the Mansion on the east slope of the hill, Copeland indicated a large wooded area planted with evergreens. Most likely intended to be Norway spruce, the spiky trees would provide a picturesque setting for the Mansion that accentuated the natural topography. Above this wooded area, Copeland specified retention of a large rock outcrop.

Reflecting the popularity of the Gardenesque style then coming into vogue, Copeland incorporated a series of oval and rounded—shaped ornamental garden beds on the formal south, east, and north sides of the Mansion. Together

with beds along the verandah foundation, these would provide the color and variety that was in keeping with the Victorian fashion for “bedding-out.” In addition to lawn beds, Copeland proposed a vase for flowers directly in front of the Mansion entrance, flower-filled wire baskets in the lawn on the Mansion’s south side, and a fountain in the tear-shaped oval adjoining the porte cochere.<sup>51</sup> As a necessary component for the outdoor flower displays in the beds, vases, and baskets, Copeland sited greenhouses at the edge of the hill close to the rear of the Mansion, overlooking ground that sloped down to the Ottauquechee River. This southern exposure allowed the greenhouses to receive maximum sunlight.<sup>52</sup>

On the old hilltop pasture west of the Mansion and greenhouses, Copeland proposed a large kitchen garden where fruits and vegetables would be grown for domestic use. [Figure 3.12] It was here that Copeland combined his expertise in scientific farming with landscape gardening. Unlike the ornamental grounds around the Mansion, the Billings kitchen garden was to be laid out in an orthogonal pattern that was best for efficient growing, with axial paths that connected to winding paths and drives leading out to the grounds. For Copeland, the geometric and utilitarian quality of the garden was not out of keeping with the larger ornamental grounds:

*There seems to be a general feeling that a kitchen-garden cannot be in harmony with ornamental grounds, and must, therefore, be removed from them, lest the sight of it mar our enjoyment of their beauty. Now it is not only a necessity, but it may be an ornament to every estate, as much as the lawn or the flower garden. What though its arrangement be rectangular, while curves preponderate in the other grounds? The two are not*

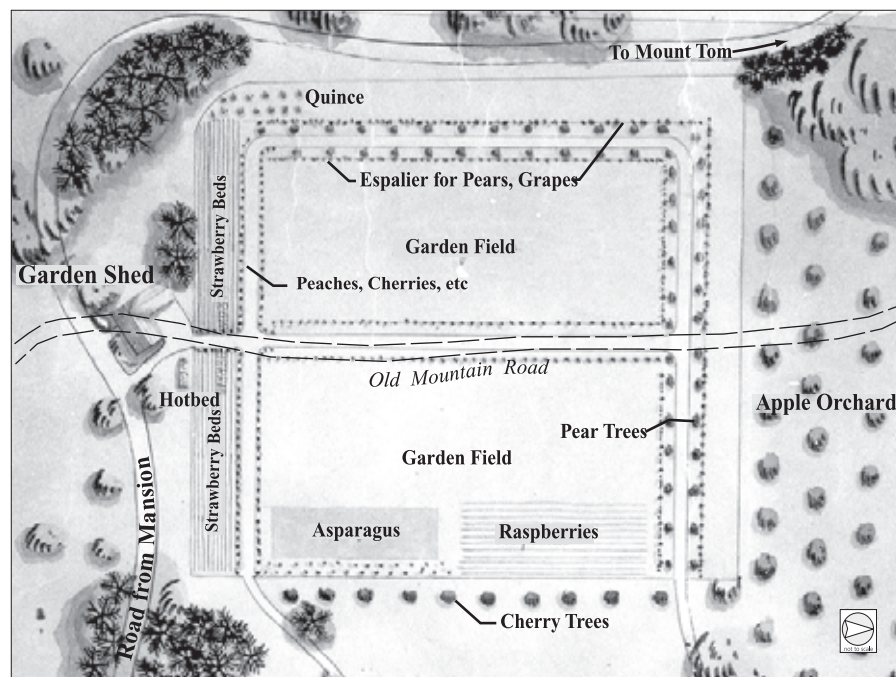


Figure 3.12: Detail of the kitchen garden in the 1869 Copeland plan. Billings Family Archives, annotated by SUNY ESF. The dashed lines indicate the approximate location of the old mountain road during the Marsh period.

*necessarily at variance; the effect of each may be much heightened by the contrast which the other presents. The love of the beautiful is often developed and the mind kept active and appreciative by the stimulus of judicious contrast.*<sup>53</sup>

Following Copeland’s completion of the plan for the Mansion grounds in 1869, Frederick Billings had him come back to Woodstock several times through the early months of 1870, perhaps to make revisions or for general guidance on implementation.<sup>54</sup> While Billings mainly oversaw work on the grounds, he also did some himself, as Julia Billings indicated in her diary for the following days in 1870:

May 2nd: [Frederick] was busy on the hill. June 11th: We came in leaving F. directing work on the Hill. June 14th: Frederick busy all day at Hill. June 24th: F. busy at his place-setting up new furniture & busy in grounds. July 1st: F. overseeing work on avenues & grass plats. July 5th: [Frederick] was at the house a while—Mowed part of the lawn & was out again in the eve’g.<sup>55</sup>

## THE MANSION TERRACE: REBUILDING OF THE MARSH HOUSE

One of the first projects that Frederick Billings undertook on the Mansion grounds was the renovation and expansion of the Marsh house. As early as March 19, 1869—only two days after the deed for the property had been entered into town records—Frederick Billings was meeting with the architect William Ralph Emerson of Boston, a distant cousin of the author Ralph Waldo Emerson.<sup>56</sup> For the Billings commission, Emerson employed the Stick style (a term coined in the twentieth century), a Victorian gothic style that originated in the mid nineteenth century interest in medieval architecture and was characterized

**Figure 3.13:** View of the north facade of the Mansion, c.1872. Billings Family Archives. The verandah and porte cochere are at the front (left) of the house, the one-and-a-half-story service wing is at the rear (right). Also visible are the gravel drives lined by cobblestone gutters and bordered by shrubs and herbaceous beds.



by expression of the building’s frame structure—the building’s “sticks”—as a decorative device.

By July 1869, work had already begun on the house. Charles Marsh (Junior) wrote to his sister: “I hope you will ride up and see the changes he [Frederick Billings] is making in the house. I think he will spoil \$60,000 before he completes all the plans he has in contemplation for the improvement of the estate in addition to the purchase money.”<sup>57</sup> Work on the house progressed through 1869, and was largely finished by July 28, 1870, the date when the family moved in.<sup>58</sup>

The completed Mansion bore little resemblance to the old (second) Marsh house, although the exterior brick walls and some of the window and door openings were retained. [Figure 3.13] The main entrance was kept on the east front of the house, but the south entrance was removed. New brick wings were added on the east, north, and rear sides. The

house was raised by the addition of a mansard roof, which Emerson enlivened with recessed dormers, gables, and iron cresting. On the south side facing Elm Street, Emerson designed a tall clipped gable roof with an interior porch, a turret-like feature that was probably quite prominent when viewed looking north along Elm Street from the village. [Figure 3.14] Emerson also incorporated a wrap-around verandah that allowed broad views out to the east and south across the intervalle and Ottawaquechee River to the village and hills in the distance. On the north side of the verandah was a porte cochere accessed from the main entrance drive. Stick-style ornamentation included



half-timbering in the gables, chamfered wood balustrades, and slender wood porch posts with angular brackets. The house was painted a buff yellow with contrasting dark trim.<sup>59</sup>

In addition to the renovation of the house, Emerson was probably also responsible for the overall design of two new service buildings, which were constructed at the same time as the Mansion in c.1869-1870; both were located as Copeland had indicated on his plan. The family called these buildings the “Laundry” and the “Stable;” both were in the Stick style, similar to the Mansion, but built entirely of wood. The Laundry was a fanciful, one-and-a-half-story building with a mansard roof, two hipped turrets, iron cresting, dormers, and clapboard siding with prominent half-timber detailing.<sup>60</sup> [Figure 3.14] The Stable featured a hipped mansard roof with a center clipped gable facing the Mansion, a central ventilating cupola with a concave spire, modillions under the eaves, and clapboard siding.<sup>61</sup> Frederick Billings also had a small house built for his coachman, a building he apparently planned after 1869, since it was not on the Copeland plan. The “Coachman’s Cottage,” as the family called the building, was constructed to the rear (north) of the Stable as a set of two small, staggered side-gable buildings on alignment with the grade of the adjoining hillside. Little is known about the origin of this house, but it was most likely constructed soon after the Stable, given its related function.<sup>62</sup>

**Figure 3.14:** Detail of a photograph of the Billings Estate illustrating the front (right) and south side of the Mansion with turret-like feature at head of Elm Street, c.1878. Woodstock Historical Society. The Laundry is partly visible at the rear (left) of the Mansion.

The Coachman’s Cottage was one of several buildings that Frederick Billings maintained for his staff. The only other one on the Mansion grounds was the Gardener’s Cottage, the pre-existing house that Billings had acquired from William T. Washburn in 1872. Located on North Street at the southwestern corner of the Mansion grounds, the one-and-a-half-story frame building had been built in c.1858 by Nathan and Arriette Claflin.<sup>63</sup> It was a typical vernacular Vermont house of the late 1850s, with a steeply pitched center gable, six-over-six sash windows, and a full-width front porch. This house served as the home of the head gardener, who was the counterpart of the farm manager for the Mansion grounds.

### **Building the Mansion Terrace Landscape**

While Frederick Billings was busy renovating the Mansion and getting the farm in order in the spring of 1869, he was also beginning work on the landscape of the Mansion terrace, the portion of the grounds surrounding the house and adjoining Elm and River Streets. Over the course of the next five years, Billings closely followed the general concept of the Copeland plan, and implemented many of its details. [Figure 3.15].<sup>64</sup>

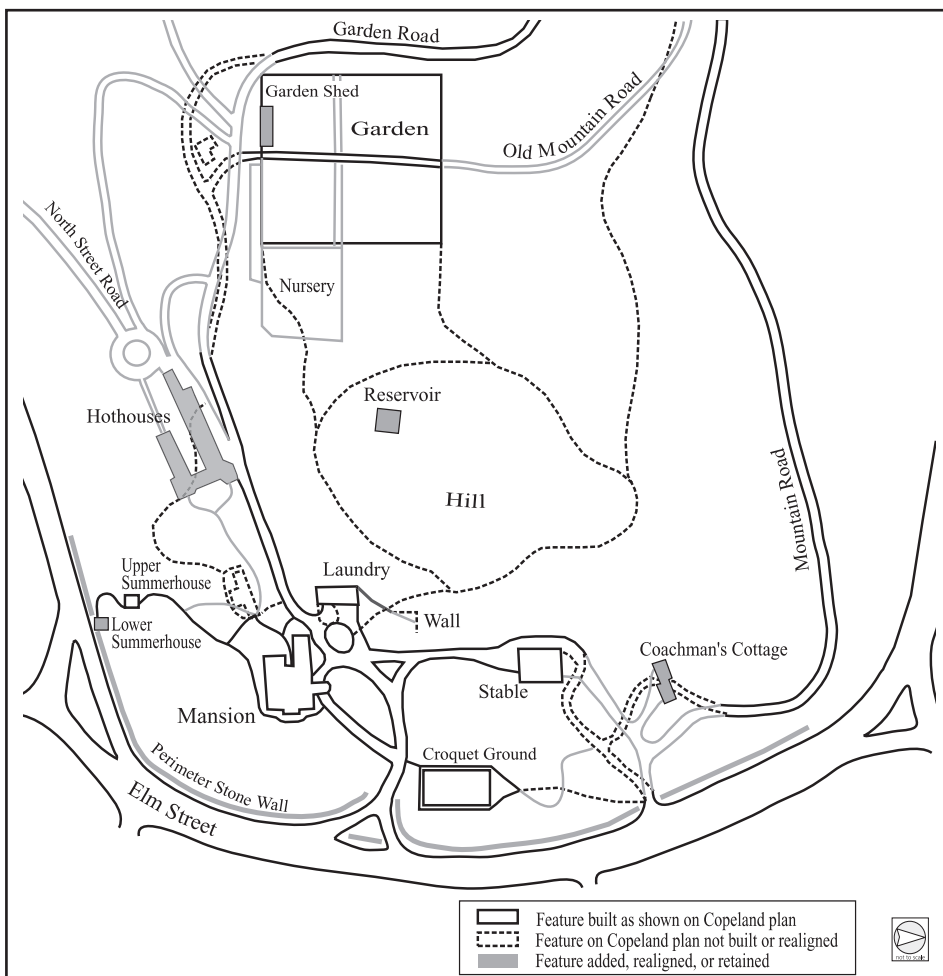


The first work that Frederick Billings probably undertook on the Mansion grounds in 1869, perhaps even before Copeland finalized his plan, was the removal of the white picket fence and stone pasture wall along the south lane to make way for reconstruction of the Mansion. At the same time, work was underway on demolition or relocation of all of the other Marsh buildings. The first Marsh house, built in 1789, was moved off the Mansion grounds to the lower terrace across Elm Street on the western edge of the intervale meadow. Later known as the Octagon Cottage, the house would serve until 1890 as the farm manager's residence.<sup>65</sup> The adjoining Marsh tenant house was also moved to about one mile north on the old turnpike, where it was later known as the Emerson Cottage. The remaining buildings, including the carriage barn, upper barn, and

sheds, were probably demolished.<sup>66</sup> By the late summer of 1869, work had begun on grading around the Mansion, partly to remove the south lane and to establish a unified lawn out of the front garden and south pasture. The progress of grading and initial site improvements was noted by Frederick's sister Lizzie, who wrote him on September 8 regarding the visit of Mrs. George Perkins Marsh to the Mansion grounds:

*She is delighted with the improvements thus far, and said she was pleased to have you have it [the Marsh Place]. . . I hope you will not let them grade the hill in front of the house too much, as it will make the house stand too high from the grounds. I do not like to see the cellar windows.<sup>67</sup>*

**Figure 3.15: Diagram of major landscape features constructed by Frederick Billings to c.1875, compared with Copeland plan completed in 1869. SUNY ESF.**



Billings would in fact raise much of the grade on the perimeter of the grounds, but in so doing he was careful

to preserve the mature trees around the Mansion—primarily elms and maples—in part by maintaining the grade immediately around the trunks.<sup>68</sup> Along the Elm and River Street perimeter of the grounds, the raised grade was retained by a stone wall that was reconstructed from the pre-existing pasture walls. [Figure 3.16] Billings may have intended the wall to function as a “ha-ha,” a type of wall used on English country estates to keep farm animals off formal grounds while permitting unobstructed views to the surrounding landscape. Billings planned on extending this perimeter wall around the entire Mansion grounds, a project he would not complete for eight years.<sup>69</sup>



Figure 3.16: View across the front lawn of the Mansion from Elm Street, c.1875. Billings Family Archives. In the foreground is the perimeter stone retaining wall. Note depressions around the mature trees indicating the extent to which the grade had been raised. Also visible are potted tropical plants on the lawn and perimeter planting of shrubs and Norway spruce above the wall.

Along with grading and wall building, Billings constructed underground utilities at an early stage.<sup>70</sup> Just as Charles Marsh had installed an innovative wood aqueduct in c.1790, so too did Frederick Billings plan innovative, expansive systems of gas, water, and sewer utilities. Public utilities were just becoming prevalent in cities at the time, but except for gas, were not common in small villages such as Woodstock. The Mansion grounds water system was supplied from a new reservoir built on the hillside at the back of the Mansion. It not only supplied domestic water to the Mansion, but also fed a system of hydrants to water the lawns and gardens, installed by 1874.<sup>71</sup> The old Marsh

well off the south side of the rear wing of the Mansion was replaced by a new well built in c.1872 on the south side of the rear wing. This new well, used for drinking water, was topped with a gable-roofed well house.<sup>72</sup>

Corresponding with the water system was a network of “drains” which apparently served both as sanitary and storm sewers. The drains were developed according to two watersheds: one on the north side of the Mansion that emptied into Barnard Brook (known as Beaver Creek, and before that, the North Branch), and one on the south side that emptied into the Ottauquechee River.

The third system of utilities was for municipal gas. The lines were connected with the village system from a pipe running across the Elm Street Bridge. Frederick Billings extended the gas lines to provide lamps along Elm Street and the walks and paths on the Mansion grounds. These lamps consisted of cast-iron posts, probably about six feet tall, with single glass luminaires topped by bell-shaped hoods.<sup>73</sup>

By July 1870, work began on the drives (the family also called them avenues). Billings followed Copeland’s circulation plan closely, even down to details such as a gate on the main entrance drive. On the Mansion terrace, Billings surfaced the drives—which averaged about twelve feet wide—with gravel; he lined them with cobblestone gutters, with cross drainage provided by waterbars.<sup>74</sup> In 1874, he changed the surface material of the drives to a white gravel taken from a bank near the Thompson farm, because the initial gravel had proved too “dirty”<sup>75</sup> [see Figure 3.13].

Equally important for the circulation on the Mansion terrace were the walks and paths. Like Charles Marsh (Senior) before him and as R. M. Copeland probably advocated as he had at Sleepy Hollow, Billings integrated his estate into the larger circulation of the village by connecting with the sidewalks on Elm Street.<sup>76</sup> The main

pedestrian entrance to the Mansion grounds was opposite the Elm Street Bridge, where a curving path led through the stone perimeter wall up toward the Mansion. This path, completed by March 1873, was built as Copeland had planned, complete with a single summerhouse, later known as the Upper Summerhouse.<sup>77</sup> Summerhouses were open-air pavilions designed as focal points and places to relax and take in the surrounding views; they were popular fixtures in nineteenth-century landscape gardens. The Upper Summerhouse was built in a characteristic rustic style: the entire building, including the eaves and roof, was sheathed in twigs set in geometric patterns. The structure was square in plan with a low-hipped roof, two window openings and two passageways, and was set on a low terrace above a dry-laid stone wall. In 1874 or 1875, the Lower Summerhouse, of a similar size but with different openings and twig detailing, was constructed below the first, within the perimeter stone wall.<sup>78</sup> [Figure 3.17] Once through the Summerhouses, the path led past the large boulder and across the lawn to a circuit around the Mansion. These paths were approximately six feet wide, and were built to match the drives with white gravel surfaces and cobblestone gutters.<sup>79</sup>

In addition to strolling and driving, the Mansion grounds were also designed for more active recreation, as illustrated by the Croquet Ground sited by Copeland on the location of the fist Marsh house. The Croquet Ground was a rectangular lawn terrace approximately a hundred feet long by fifty-five feet wide, framed by paths. Croquet is thought to have originated in France, but became popular in England and Ireland during the early nineteenth century, and then appeared in the United States around 1870. It was one of the first games in which men and women competed on an even basis.<sup>80</sup> The Billings croquet field, designed in 1869, was apparently one of the earliest examples in the country. It was built by June 1872, and through



**Figure 3.17:** View toward the Summerhouses from Elm Street, c.1875. Billings Family Archives. The triangular park above the Elm Street Bridge is in the foreground, and soon-to-be-completed greenhouses in the background. Note mature elms and profuse young plantings around the Upper Summerhouse.

out the summer of that year, was the scene of frequent games and even several croquet parties.<sup>81</sup> In addition to the Croquet Ground, Frederick Billings also built a “play ground” for the children. Little information about the playground survives, except that it was a turf area located off the southwest (rear) end of the Mansion.<sup>82</sup>

Both the Croquet Ground and the playground adjoined the expansive lawn that surrounded the Mansion. As early as July 1, 1870, Julia Billings recorded that her husband was working on “the grass plats;” by May of 1872, the lawns were sufficiently established for strolling.<sup>83</sup> The completed lawn extended along the front, south side, and rear of the Mansion. It was kept at a short height, typically cut by a mechanical mower.<sup>84</sup> The lawn was shaded in part by

mature American elms, under which lawn seats were placed.<sup>85</sup> North of the Mansion, along the swale between the Stable and the Croquet Ground, and on other open areas away from the Mansion, the ground was maintained as meadow and cut with a scythe for hay.<sup>86</sup>

The carpet-bedding and other Gardenesque-style features indicated on the Copeland plan were planted around 1870, when the work on the Mansion and surrounding grading was sufficiently complete. The flowerbeds, initially in the oval and round shapes Copeland specified, were planted in the typical “bedding-out” fashion with patterns of colorful flowering annuals of a consistent height to produce the effect of an oriental carpet, perhaps with marigolds,

**Figure 3.18:** View up the main entrance drive toward the Mansion with the path around the Croquet Ground in the foreground, c.1872. Billings Family Archives. Note beds along the drive filled with herbaceous plants, as well as beds bordering the verandah planted with low flowering annuals.



allyssum, and impatiens. [Figure 3.18] These flowerbeds were planted by the head gardener, Mr. Grant, but Frederick Billings supervised their arrangement.<sup>87</sup> Billings apparently did not add the fountain that Copeland had specified in the island of the main entrance drive, but may for a time have displayed wire baskets of flowers that Copeland planned for the lawn to the east and south of the Mansion.<sup>88</sup> Billings also displayed pots of large tropical foliage plants on the lawn by the early 1870s, in keeping with the fashion of the Subtropical Movement.<sup>89</sup> Early additions that Frederick Billings made to the Copeland plan were informal flowerbeds along the main entrance drive. These beds, planted with shrubs and a wide variety of herbaceous plants, reflected Aesthetic sensibilities for irregularity and natural forms. Plants as varied as acanthus, grasses, sunflowers, day lilies, yucca, peonies, phlox, begonias, forsythia, and spirea were favorite Aesthetic varieties and may have been planted in these beds.<sup>90</sup>

In addition to the flowerbeds and tropical plants, the Mansion lawn was ornamented with evergreen and deciduous shrubs. As early as May of 1871, Julia Billings noted that her husband was supervising the “setting out of shrubbery.”<sup>91</sup> The most prominent shrubs were arborvitae (white cedar, *Thuja occidentalis*), which were planted at regular intervals along the main entry drive and paths around the Mansion and were clipped into rounded shapes.<sup>92</sup> At the head of the main entrance drive at Elm Street, Billings established a short section of clipped hemlock hedge.<sup>93</sup> In less formal areas farther away from the Mansion, such as around the large boulder and the Summerhouses, various deciduous shrubs were planted in naturalistic groupings, in keeping with the more rustic character of that part of the grounds [see Figure 3.17].

Along with shrubs, Billings also began an extensive program of tree planting. The earliest known mention of tree planting occurred in the spring of 1873, when he directed Julia to



have trees set out between the Upper Summerhouse and the Mansion (probably sugar maple and red oak), followed by the setting out of fifty “evergreens” (most likely Norway spruce and Canadian hemlock) on May 7.<sup>94</sup> The following year, American elms were transplanted onto the Mansion lawn.<sup>95</sup> Along the Elm and River Street perimeter of the Mansion lawn, Billings established continuous, irregularly spaced plantings of Norway spruce and various other trees and shrubs above the stone wall extending toward the Elm Street bridge, diverging from the more limited clumps of trees that Copeland had specified.<sup>96</sup> [Figure 3.19] These plantings, made in the fall of 1874 or spring of 1875, were probably intended as a screen to set the Mansion apart from the adjoining public roads, but they did not interfere, at least initially, with the views out from the grounds because of the downward slope of the ground. Between 1876 and 1877, the perimeter plantings were extended west of the Summerhouses along River Street and north of the Croquet Ground along Elm Street to the bank facing the Thompson Place, again using Norway spruce.<sup>97</sup>

American elms were familiar native trees that already existed on the Marsh Place both in the woodlots and as specimens. Hemlock, a native tree found on cool and moist elevations of Mount Tom, was popular as an ornamental that assumed “very irregular and picturesque forms,” according to Andrew Jackson Downing. Downing also liked the Norway spruce, a native of northern Europe that early settlers had brought to North America. He called the Norway spruce “strikingly picturesque” and “the great tree of the Alps; and as a park tree, to stand alone, we scarcely know a more beautiful one.”<sup>98</sup> Beginning in the mid nine-

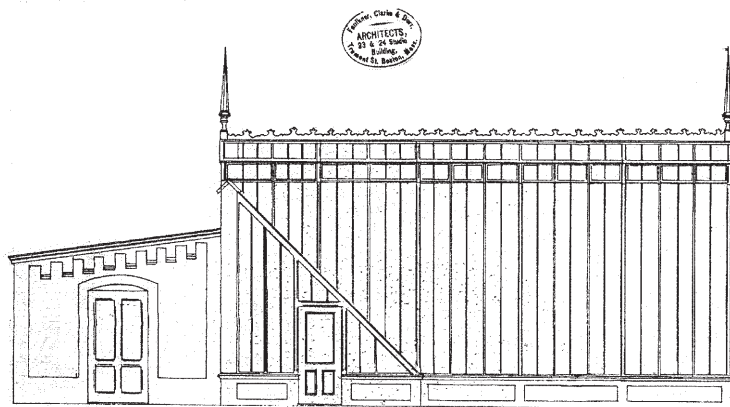
**Figure 3.19: Panorama of the Mansion grounds looking northwest from Woodstock village following Frederick Billings’s initial improvements, c.1875. Woodstock Historical Society. In the center of the photograph is the Mansion, just visible behind mature trees in the surrounding lawn. Also visible are the young evergreens along the Elm Street perimeter, and toward the right, the Stable and roof of the Coachman’s Cottage. At the left of the photograph are the Hothouses, which would be completed between 1872 and 1874.**

teenth century, when Downing’s books were becoming popular, the Norway spruce became a favored ornamental in the landscape. The Marshes had planted one behind the Mansion, and Frederick Billings would make prolific use of the tree across the Mansion grounds, both in plantations and as specimens.

### **Planning and Construction of the Hothouses**

In 1872, Frederick Billings began to build the last major structures illustrated on the Copeland plan: the greenhouses, which the family called the “Hothouses.”<sup>99</sup> Aside from their utilitarian function, the Hothouses would provide a place for the family to stroll amid tropical plants and flowers, an especially welcome activity during the long Vermont winters.

In 1870, around the same time that Billings engaged Copeland and Emerson to plan the grounds, Mansion, and outbuildings, he turned to the Boston architectural firm of Faulkner, Clarke, and Dorr to design a greenhouse.<sup>100</sup> The firm’s design, similar to the layout Copeland indicated, called for a central pavilion with flanking wings, ornamented with Gothic-style cresting and pinnacles, with a brick potting room and bowling alley at the rear.



**Figure 3.20: West side elevation of proposed greenhouses design by Faulkner, Clarke and Dorr, c.1870. Billings Family Archives. The proposed brick bowling alley building is at the left.**

[Figure 3.20] Perhaps because Faulkner, Clarke, and Dorr were together as a firm for only about one year, Billings never implemented their plans and would not begin work on a revised scheme for the greenhouses until two years later. By July 1872, Billings had commissioned a new architect for the project and was reviewing fresh plans.

Because of business at the Northern Pacific offices in New York City, Billings frequently had to be away from Woodstock, so he needed someone to have close oversight of the project. In August 1872, he asked James Williams, a family friend and New York City lawyer and merchant, to assist.<sup>101</sup> By September, Williams was in Woodstock directing the site work and overseeing the beginning of construction, as he wrote to Billings:

*My dear friend, I came up comfortably on Friday, and found all well. There was but 3/4 of a days work added to the Green House since you left in the consequence of rain—Saturday was a good day, and the work progressed famously—The old rock under the maple is stubborn—We have it now so we can get the carts in on every side of it, and I had hoped for great things today, but a heavy storm set in last night and it pours in torrents. Mr. Barker was here Saturday, & with the plans of Lineau [sic] he was able to order lumber,*

*and finally started his part of the work—I like him much. If Lord was as prompt I should feel easier—Together we studied over the Bowling Alley, and I am now making the drawings—But for this work I should be tempted to go to town today—<sup>102</sup>*

In this letter, Williams indicates that the architect for the greenhouse complex was a Mr. “Lineau,” the German-born and New York City-based architect Detlef Lienau.

Lienau was trained in Germany and France and worked in the office of the prominent Parisian architect Henri Labrousse between 1842 and 1847. Lienau’s practice in the United States, active between his arrival in 1850 through 1887, involved a wide variety of building types and styles, but he became best known for his introduction of the mansard roof to the United States and for his Renaissance and Romanesque Revival-style buildings in and around New York City. He also had country-place commissions, where he made use of rustic styles. He was one of only a few European-trained architects in the United States in the mid nineteenth century, and was one of the thirteen original charter members of the American Institute of Architects, founded in 1857.<sup>103</sup>

Lienau was responsible for the overall design of the complex, with the frame and brick buildings constructed by a local contractor, a Mr. Barker, and project oversight and drafting assistance by James Williams.<sup>104</sup> The builder of the greenhouses, whom Williams also mentioned in his September letter to Billings, was Frederick Lord of Lord’s Horticultural Works.<sup>105</sup> This firm had recently relocated to Irvington-on-Hudson from Syracuse, New York where it had been founded in 1856; it would become during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the largest and most prominent greenhouse builder in the country, under the name Lord & Burnham.<sup>106</sup>

By August 1872, construction had begun and the complex was largely complete by September 1874.<sup>107</sup> Instead of a central pavilion flanked by wings, Lienau’s design organ-

ized the greenhouses in a U-shaped plan, with the main greenhouses in an east-west orientation that provided southern exposure, necessary to maximize sunlight. [Figure 3.21] The new plan also included a prominent two-story wood-frame building which, with its expansive views south and east, the family would name the “Belvedere,” meaning “beautiful view.” Most estate greenhouses of the period featured a frame or brick building that adjoined the greenhouses to serve as a potting shed, gardener’s cottage, or parlor. Detlef Lienau designed the Belvedere in the Swiss Chalet style, which had been popularized by Andrew Jackson Downing as suitable for “bold and mountainous” sites, or for “the bottom of a wooded hill.”<sup>108</sup>

The Belvedere featured a low-slung roof, wide overhanging eaves with brackets and exposed rafters, a second-story verandah, and fanciful scrollwork detailing. [Figure 3.22] The building was painted in a medium earth tone with dark trim. During its early years, the Belvedere served as a parlor and was outfitted with willow furniture, in keeping with the rustic character of the architecture.<sup>109</sup> The adjoining brick structure, which housed the Bowling Alley, Potting Room, and boilers for the greenhouses, was a long, one-story building 105 feet in length.<sup>110</sup>

There were four greenhouses in the complex, and all were built on low brick foundation walls, painted wood frames (probably red on the outside), and lapped glass. An eight-sided conservatory, which the family called the “Octagon”, was the most prominent greenhouse in the complex.<sup>111</sup> [Figure 3.22] Located opposite and downhill from the Belvedere, the Octagon was thirty-four feet long on each side and was designed as a show house for ornamental plants, which were arranged in pots set on benches. The Octagon featured an entrance porch on the east side facing the Mansion, eaves’ ventilators, high walls, and a curvilinear roof surmounted by a ventilating monitor. The Octagon was connected to the Belvedere by a twenty-foot wide even-span greenhouse fitted with a “tropical flower bed.” Frederick Billings

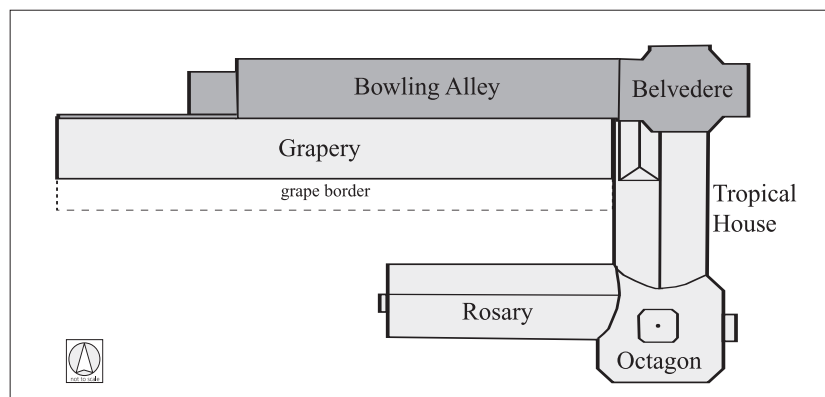
initially referred to this greenhouse as the “40-foot Hot House,” and it was later known as the “Tropical House” and “Stove House.”<sup>112</sup>

Adjoining the south side of the Bowling Alley was a half-span (lean-to) greenhouse known as the “Grapery,” a specialized greenhouse used for raising grapes. [Figure 3.23] The Grapery featured a curvilinear roof rising from a low wall, and iron cresting along the ridge. It was sixteen feet wide and extended fifty feet past the end of the Bowling Alley, where it backed up to a freestanding brick wall. An outdoor grape border, apparently with openings to allow the grape plants to grow into the greenhouse, lined the south side of the building.<sup>113</sup>

The fourth greenhouse in the complex was the Rosary, also known as the “Hot House,” probably because it was kept at high temperatures to force the roses into bloom. [Figure 3.23] This greenhouse extended off the west side of the Octagon, and measured twenty feet wide and sixty feet long, and had an uneven-span curvilinear roof with cresting on the ridge. Roses in this house were probably grown for cut-flower production, and vines—perhaps climbing roses—were trained up the north roof.

To the east of the Hothouses, the grounds were kept as lawn, through which a walk was laid out in August 1873 to connect the Hothouses to the Mansion.<sup>114</sup> [Figure 3.22]

**Figure 3.21: Layout of the greenhouse complex, as completed by 1874. SUNY ESF, based on Doton survey of 1887-88. Buildings in dark gray are brick and frame; those in light gray are greenhouses.**





Parallel to this walk was a drive, lined with widely spaced arborvitae shrubs, which provided access to the Hothouses from the main entrance drive. The road leading up the hill to the kitchen garden branched off this drive at the back of the Hothouses. At the west or rear of the Hothouses was a service drive with a circular turn-around that led west to North Street, where the Gardener's Cottage was located. To the south of the Hothouses, the land sloped down to River Street and the Ottauquechee River. In May 1873, Billings was busy terracing this slope, which he called "Hot House hill" and maintained as a meadow of clover and grass.<sup>115</sup>

### Initial Development of the Hill

The Billings family called the foothill at the rear of the Mansion "the hill," a name they also used for the entire Mansion grounds. Here in this informal landscape, Frederick Billings built the kitchen garden and established his earliest forest plantations on the old pastures. He also

**Figure 3.22:** The east side of the Hothouses, with the Belvedere to the right, the Octagon to the left, and the Tropical House in the middle, c.1875. Courtesy Jane McDill Smith, Woodstock, Vermont. The maple to which James Williams referred in his letter is probably the one behind the Belvedere, showing evidence of decline from the impact of grading. Also visible is a recently established plantation of Norway spruce on the adjoining hillside.

referred to it as "Reservoir Hill," a reference to the spring-fed water-holding structure that was probably one of the first improvements made there.<sup>116</sup> Built in c.1869, the Reservoir consisted of a thirty-eight-foot square basin covered by a roof, and was sited at the top of the slope at the rear of the Mansion, behind a grove of oak trees. [Figure 3.24, 3.25] Water was supplied from a well in the Spring Lot, a mountain-top pasture located northeast of the Pogue, and transferred through an "aqueduct," most likely an underground pipe.<sup>117</sup> There were two main feed pipes from the Reservoir: one to the Mansion and Hothouses, another to the Stable.





Figure 3.23: The west side of the Hothouses, with the Grapery and adjoining hotbed to the left, the Rosary to the right, and the Belvedere, Tropical House, and Octagon in the background, c.1875. Billings Family Archives. The circle at the end of the service drive to North Street is in the foreground.

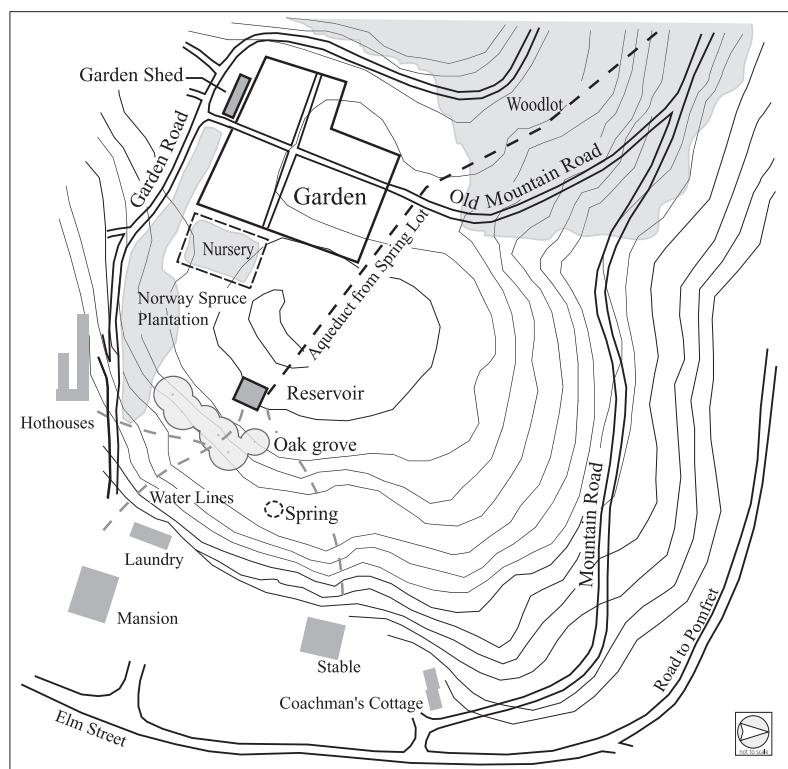
Along with the Reservoir, another early project on the hill was improvement of the old mountain road that extended from the back of the Mansion and cut through the middle of the hilltop pasture. Portions of the old road were retained, but a new extension was built around the kitchen garden, extending west until it joined a new mountain road that Billings had constructed along the north slope of the hill by the fall of 1872, following Copeland's alignment.<sup>118</sup> Unlike the more formal drives near the Mansion, these mountain roads were not surfaced and did not have gutters.<sup>119</sup> They were built for both utilitarian and recreational purposes.

Frederick Billings probably began development of the kitchen garden soon after Copeland designed it in 1869. Known by the family simply as "the Garden," it was laid out very closely to the Copeland design, and with its panoramic hilltop views, became a favorite place for family walks.<sup>120</sup> By the spring of 1874, Billings was noting in his diary that he was planting summer squash and cucumbers, and setting out posts for grape vines.<sup>121</sup> Billings raised a great variety of vegetables, flowers, and fruits for the family's

own use; another vegetable garden was located on the farm. Whether Billings followed Copeland's planting specifications for apple, cherry, and pear trees, as well as espalier for pears and grapes and a hot frame, is not known. Billings introduced a tree nursery to the southeast side of the garden, beyond the rectangular area delineated by Copeland. By August 1874, Billings had six hundred evergreens in the nursery.<sup>122</sup>

At an early date, Frederick Billings had a shed built on the south side of the Garden, near the location that Copeland had proposed. Although it is not known when exactly this building was constructed, it does appear in a photograph of the Mansion grounds taken in c.1878. [Figures 3.25] Known as the Garden Shed, Tool Shed or Shed, and later as the Stone Shed, this frame building had a cross-gable roof and three open bays with arched enframements on the south side.<sup>123</sup> It was initially used for garden-related workspace and storage.

Figure 3.24: Layout of the hill, c.1874. SUNY ESF, based on Doton surveys of 1885-1888 and period photographs.





**Figure 3.25: Panorama of the Mansion grounds looking northwest from Woodstock village, c.1878. Woodstock Historical Society. Visible on the hill at the upper left side is the Garden and Garden Shed, with the woodlot in the background. Above the Hothouses are the oak grove (with dark foliage) and the young Norway spruce plantation established in August 1874.**

In the portion of the hill outside the Garden, Frederick Billings implemented little of the Copeland plan aside from the new mountain road along the north slope. Instead of clumps of trees punctuating open meadow, Billings planned to reforest the landscape, expanding upon the forested east slope that Copeland had designed behind the Mansion as well as the existing woodlot north and west of the Garden. Billings set out what was probably his first forest plantation in August 1874 along the south slope of the hill, which had recently been cut back for construction of the Hothouses. [Figure 3.25, see also Figure 3.22] It is likely that Billings established this plantation to address potential erosion problems on a steep slope, following the philosophy of George Perkins Marsh, as well as to beautify the landscape and provide a backdrop for the Hothouses. On August 27, 1874, Frederick Billings recorded in his diary, “Finished setting out evergreens—few left in garden [nursery], 600 in all.” The “evergreens” were Norway spruce.<sup>124</sup> Prior to reforesting the rest of the hill, Billings made good use of the old pastures by cutting the grasses for hay. These hillsides were also places for the children to play; in July 1875, Billings noted that twelve-year-old Parmly had pitched his tent “on hill back of laundry.”<sup>125</sup>

### **Landscape Maturation and Maintenance**

With completion by the fall of 1874 of the Hothouses and the many other improvements on the Mansion grounds, Frederick Billings declared to his diary that he found “the landscape very beautiful.” With over five years of hard work, he had largely established the landscape that he had envisioned with the help of R. M. Copeland in 1869.

Billings was sufficiently pleased with the improvements to date that he wrote an invitation on October 8, 1874 to George Perkins Marsh to come and see the improvements at his old boyhood home, an invitation the statesman apparently never accepted.<sup>126</sup>

In the initial years of work on the landscape, Mr. Grant, the first head gardener, hired in c.1872, was responsible for the care and upkeep of the Mansion grounds, although the farm manager would often assist on larger projects. Mr. Grant, however, did not last long; Billings fired him in July 1875 for financial impropriety. On August 14, 1875, German-born George Henry Mass was hired as the new head gardener, a position he would hold through the remainder of Frederick Billings’s lifetime and into the 1890s.<sup>127</sup> Over the years, Billings remained pleased with Mr. Mass’s management of the grounds, even convincing him to stay on when he wanted to leave. Billings was particularly pleased with Mass’s talent in raising hothouse grapes, often remarking how “splendid” the Grapery looked.<sup>128</sup>

The Mansion grounds were well used and loved by the family. Both Frederick and Julia often remarked in their diaries and letters about the picturesque beauty of the landscape, both in winter and summer: “Up early & sat by the window to enjoy the beautiful landscape—a mint beau-

tiful day—the country is glorious . . .” (Frederick writing in June); “A bright sky greets us after the snow storm of yest’y. The landscape is so beautiful that I have Mr. Gates to photograph two views from the South windows of Papa’s room.” (Julia writing in January).<sup>129</sup> [Figure 3.26] A favorite place to spend summer days was the verandah of the Mansion, with a book or in conversation over tea with family and friends, overlooking the broad view to the intervale and village. Other typical daily activities included strolling up to the Garden and down via the Hothouses; taking drives on the roads up Mount Tom; and gathering ferns in the woods. For the Billings children, the Mansion grounds must have been an ideal place, with the hills, woods, playground, Bowling Alley, and adjoining farm. On winter days in the 1870s, the young children coasted down the sloping lawn south of the Mansion, and during the warmer months, the boulder there was a favorite place to play, judging by wear in the lawn evident in period photographs.<sup>130</sup> Yet it was apparently not all play for the children. Parmlly, for example, helped with watering newly planted shrubs, trimming trees, and clearing weeds from the gutters along the drives; and Mary helped with gathering raspberries, blackberries, and chestnuts.<sup>131</sup>

Despite his fondness for Woodstock, from the mid 1870s through 1881 Frederick Billings spent much of his time in New York City as president of the Northern Pacific Railroad. His diaries from this period reflect a preoccupation with business affairs, which weighed heavily on him.<sup>132</sup> While he oversaw improvements to the Mansion grounds during this period, none amounted to substantial alteration of what he had earlier established. Even the



**Figure 3.26: Photograph for Julia Billings by E. R. Gates, taken from the Mansion looking south toward the boulder and Upper Summerhouse, circa January 21, 1880. Billings Family Archives. In the right foreground is one of the gas lamps located on the walks and drives around the Mansion.**

larger farm and forest went through no major improvements or expansion; between 1875 and 1881, for example, less than a hundred acres were added to the estate.<sup>133</sup>

During this time, the family’s use of the Mansion grounds went through a period of transition as it became less of a year-round home and more of a seasonal home and typical country place. Part of this transition may have been due to improved transportation; the arrival of the railroad in Woodstock in 1875 made travel between Woodstock and

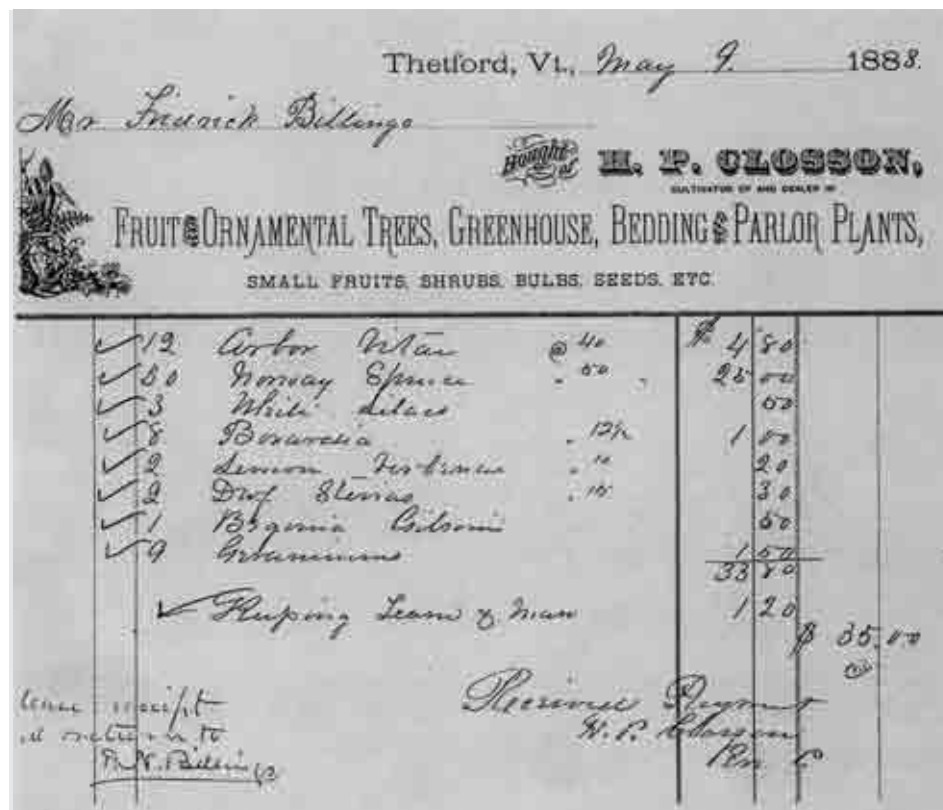


Figure 3.27: A receipt for shrubs, trees, and bedding plants from the early 1880s: 12 arborvitae, 50 Norway spruce, 3 white lilac, 8 bouvardia, 2 verbenas, 2 dwarf stevias, 1 begonia, and 9 geraniums. Billings Farm & Museum.

New York City possible in less than ten hours.<sup>134</sup> It is likely that a more significant factor in the changing use of the Mansion grounds was the effect of Frederick Billings's frequent absences on Julia and the family. Having grown up in New York City, Julia found village life and harsh winters in Woodstock difficult, especially while raising seven children. As early as February 1874, she and the children temporarily moved from Woodstock to the Parmly family home in New York City until the warmer weather returned. Subsequent Woodstock winters proved difficult for Julia, and by the late 1870s she and the children were spending much of the winter and spring in New York City. Finally, in March 1881, Frederick Billings purchased a house at 279 Madison Avenue, New York City, as the family's winter residence.<sup>135</sup> After this time, the Woodstock estate was more definitely used as a seasonal country place, something it had evolved into—apparently more by neces-

sity than choice—over the previous decade. While the family made visits to Woodstock in the winter, after 1881 they lived continuously at the Mansion usually from May through October, and sometimes as late as Thanksgiving.<sup>136</sup> Despite this transition to seasonal use, Woodstock remained what Frederick and the entire family referred to as “home.”

Although no longer occupied by the family year-round, the landscape was maintained at its usual high level. In April, the hedges and shrubs were trimmed, and then the lawn was

repaired from winterkill, typically requiring a crew of men in the early spring to apply loam and muck, and to strip and returf portions with sod. Another major spring project was preparation of the lawn beds, which were fortified with loam and then stocked in June with flowering and foliage plants that had been started in the Hothouses. Also in June, potted tropical plants were moved from the Hothouses onto the lawns, and lawn seats were set out. During the summer, lawns were regularly mowed with sixteen-inch mechanical mowers, and irrigated with sprinklers fed off hydrants.<sup>137</sup> By September, when the first frosts occurred, the lawn beds were cleared, the tropical plants moved back to the Hothouses, and the lawn seats put in storage. Later in the fall, the lawn was raked and mulched with ashes, muck, and manure.<sup>138</sup>

Each year, Frederick Billings purchased substantial amounts of plant material, in addition to thousands of trees for reforestation, reflecting annual change and improvement in the landscape. While there is little record of what Billings planted during the 1870s, surviving receipts from the 1880s show purchase of a wide range of shrubs,



Figure 3.28: View west up the road to the Hothouses illustrating young maple trees set in between the arborvitae, lilac, and other lawn shrubs, c.1880. Billings Family Archives.

trees, bedding plants, vegetable seeds for the Garden, and tropical plants for the Hothouses. Billings, either directly or through his farm manager and head gardener, purchased from a variety of nurseries and seedsmen, mostly in the Northeast.<sup>139</sup> [Figure 3.27]

In the fall, there were orders for spring bulbs and perennials, including the following varieties as listed on receipts from the mid 1880s: clematis, crocus, early white Roman hyacinth, single jonquils, Harris lilies, and lily of the valley; and seed orders for plants that required early starting, such as geraniums.<sup>140</sup> In the late winter and early spring, flower seeds for the bedding plants were purchased for forcing.<sup>141</sup> Later in the spring and early summer, receipts were received for the purchase of seeds, bulbs, and plants such as quilled German aster, flowering balsam, Gibson begonia, bovardia, caladium, callas, canna, cinneraria, coleus, dianthus (pinks), fuchsia, geranium, gladioli, gypsophila, impatiens, primula, roses, dwarf stevia, sunflowers (miniature and Oscar Wilde varieties), and tiger flower.<sup>142</sup> In addition to herbaceous flowering plants, ornamental shrubs and trees were added to the Mansion lawns through the late 1870s and early 1880s, supplementing the large elms

in the lawn, which remained the most prominent trees in the landscape. The elm off the southwest corner of the Mansion had grown into an especially large specimen, which the family referred to as “the big elm.”<sup>143</sup> Apart from the elms, maples and oaks were planted along the walks and drives to the south and west of the Mansion in between the arborvitae shrubs. The trees were pruned up high, probably to establish a raised canopy similar to the elms [Figure 3.28].

In the years following their completion in 1874, the Hothouses were an important ornament in the landscape, displaying

nature’s exotic diversity. They were also utilitarian structures where cut flowers, fruits, and plants were produced to supply the family table, stock the vegetable and flower gardens, and provide gifts for friends and the church, as well as to sell for income. When the family was in New York City, flowers and other produce from the greenhouses were regularly shipped to them there.<sup>144</sup> As apparently the only conservatory in Woodstock, the local newspaper often reported with great interest on how the Hothouses were, for example, “filled with rare plants and flowers and tropical fruits.”<sup>145</sup> As with the forests on Mount Tom, the Hothouses were open to the community.

The fall was typically a busy time at the Hothouses; at this time, they would be stocked with a wide array of tropical plants for winter displays. [Figure 3.29] A single order from the Hovey & Company nursery of Cambridge, Massachusetts, for example, was for nearly two hundred tropical plants, including anthurium, aralia, aspidistra, begonias, bougainvillea, clematis, clerodendron, dahlias, ferns, ficus, gardenia, hibiscus, and violets; another large order included Norfolk Island pine, bouvardia, chrysanthemums, hydrangea, royal palm, and roses (including Caroline Goodrich, The Bride, and Papa Gontier).<sup>146</sup> On a cold January day when the family was up for a visit, these tropical and flowering plants were an especially welcome part of Frederick Billings’s routine: “A glorious Winter day



Figure 3.29: View inside the Tropical House looking from the Belvedere toward the Octagon, c.1880. Billings Family Archives. The plants are potted and set on raised benches.

... In afternoon down to hot house-looking finely & Julia met me there.” A reporter visiting the Billings Estate in 1880 provided the following description of the Hothouses:

*... Back and at the right of the Mansion, we reach the splendid conservatories. At one corner is an ornamental structure [Belvedere] containing a large reception room with willow furniture, and from it extends a bowling alley in black walnut, by the side of which is the grapery, 150 feet in length. A large glass hall, containing tropical plants, leads to a high, octagonal pavilion of glass, filled with massive plants of the choicest species; and back from this extends another annex, 150 feet in length, devoted to roses and small plants.<sup>147</sup>*

The Grapery was one of the marvels of the Hothouses, as one report from the 1880s exclaimed: “Of the grapes,

‘Black Hamburgs,’ ‘Muscat of Alexandria,’ ‘Gros Moroco,’ ‘Syrian,’ and other choice varieties, I dare not speak; to tell their size, or weight, or quality, would be too risky business.”<sup>148</sup> Grapes grown under glass were typically better and larger than field-grown crops, and individual clusters often attained weights of twenty to thirty pounds. The Billings Grapery consisted of grape “borders,” so named because they were placed along the perimeter walls of the greenhouse, with some plants also possibly growing into the greenhouse from an outside border. In typical graperies of the period, a network of wires was strung out lengthwise across the underside of the glass roof on cast-iron brackets to support the grapevines. [Figure 3.30] Within the Grapery, Frederick Billings maintained two rooms: a “hot grapery,” where grapes were forced into early production with heat, and a “cold grapery,” where the grapes were not forced.<sup>149</sup> The Billings raised other vine crops along with the grapes, including cantaloupes.<sup>150</sup>

The Hothouses required substantial work to operate and maintain. During the fall, typical tasks included repairing broken glass, moving the potted tropical plants in from the Mansion lawns, putting up insulating banking around the exterior greenhouse walls (usually straw), and receiving carloads of coal (Billings once noted purchasing forty tons for a season) for winter heating. Work during other seasons included applying whitening (a calcium-based white-wash) in the summer to reduce scorching from the sun, and removing snow from the greenhouse roofs in the winter to reduce weight load and allow sunlight to enter. More substantial work came every few years when the greenhouses had to be painted, a task necessary to help preserve the wooden structural members.<sup>151</sup>

Above the Hothouses and Mansion, the hill changed significantly in character through the late 1870s and early 1880s as Frederick Billings extended his forest plantations. [Figure 3.31] In April 1877, head gardener George Mass and his assistants set out approximately four hundred evergreens on the hillside in back of the Coachman’s Cottage, and during the same month, the staff was also planting evergreens and maples on the hill. These were followed in May by a plantation of hemlock and Norway spruce on the steep bank on

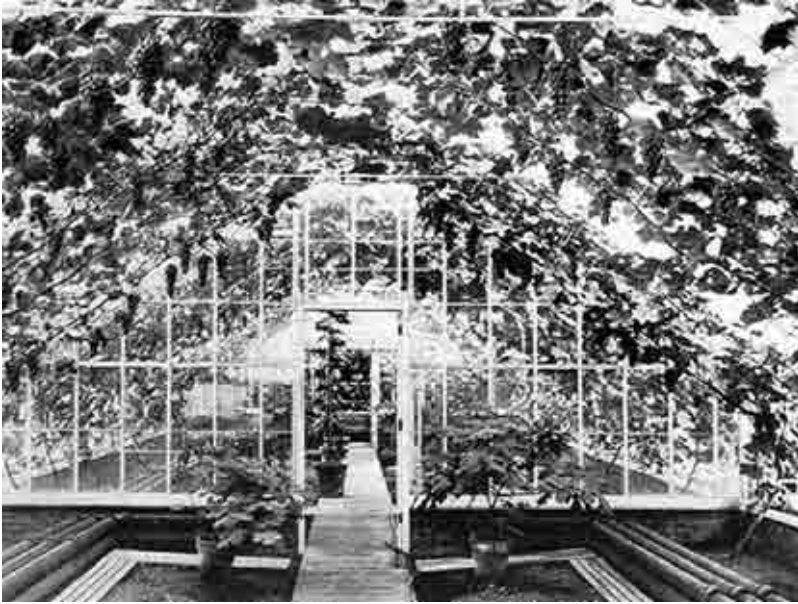


Figure 3.30: Interior view in a typical grapery, showing vines growing up along the roof from "borders" along the edges of the greenhouse. Lord & Burnham Company, *Some Greenhouses We Have Built* (Irvington: Published by the Company, 1910). The Billings Grapery would have looked similar to this, only in a single-span configuration.

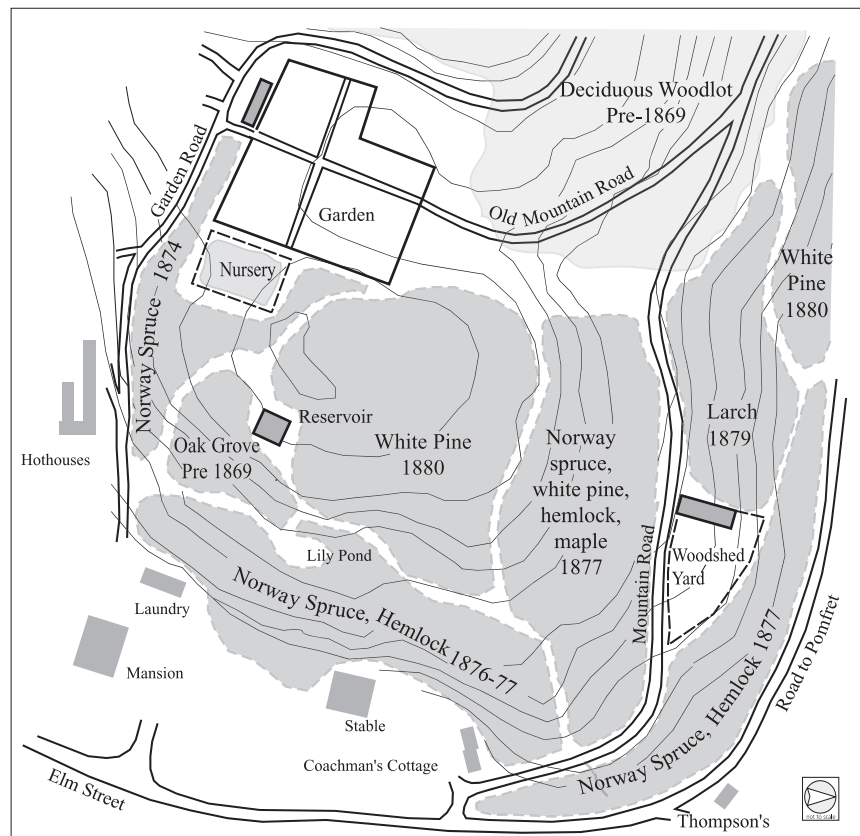
work on a woodshed in this yard to replace one on the south side of the hill that had probably been built during the Marsh era.<sup>153</sup> In June 1876, Billings was finishing construction of the Woodshed, which was five bays long and one-and-a-half stories tall, its gable perpendicular to the mountain road.<sup>154</sup> The lower level of the building was open to allow easy access and storage of lumber, and a bridge led from the upper floor to the road.

The new forest plantations served not only utilitarian forestry and slope-stabilization purposes, but also improved the aesthetic and recreational character of the hill, creat-

Figure 3.31: Diagram of the hill illustrating approximate location of forest plantations and dates of planting to c.1881. SUNY ESF, based on Doton survey of 1887-1888, Frederick Billings's diary entries, and existing forest conditions as documented in "Forest Management & Ecological Inventory Report" (John Wiggin, 1993).

the north side of the hill facing the Thompson place. A plantation of larch was added on a boggy terrace on the north slope in May 1879; these later died and were replaced in 1883. By this time, Billings was also reforesting the level top of the hill. In November 1879, he noted that maples were planted "on Reservoir hill," and in April 1880, white pines were planted near the Reservoir and on the north slope extending down toward the Thompson house.<sup>152</sup>

As Frederick Billings developed his forest operations, he needed a yard where timber products could be processed and stored. He located this on the terrace along the north slope of the hill, adjoining his new mountain road and east of his larch plantation. [Figure 3.31]. By August 1875, Billings had begun



ing a rustic forested setting immediately adjoining the formal grounds around the Mansion. These woods were a favorite spot for the family's daily strolls and drives, as Frederick Billings recorded in his diary in May 1877; a typical entry: "At 11 took Julia in pony wagon to garden & on hill by reservoir & how we enjoyed the view—and then round through the woods."<sup>155</sup>

The overall structure and orthogonal layout of the Garden as it had been laid out initially remained largely intact through the 1870s and early 1880s.<sup>156</sup> As with all of the Mansion grounds, the Garden was maintained to very high standards under the direction of head gardener George Mass. A reporter who visited the grounds in 1880 wrote that the Garden was "as neat and tasteful as a florist's beds."<sup>157</sup> Its bounty often featured prominently at the top of Frederick Billings's diary, where he recorded harvests of asparagus, beans, beets, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, corn, cucumber, eggplant, lettuce, new potatoes, peas, radishes, squash, tomatoes, plus fruits such as blackberries, raspberries, and strawberries.<sup>158</sup> According to very extensive orders of vegetable seeds made during the 1880s, many other types of vegetables were also grown in the Garden. A single order from Carson & Co. of New York in February 1884 included fifty-two varieties of vegetables, such as Daur's Improved Lima Beans, Dark Red Egyptian Beet, Scotch Kale, Flat Dutch Cabbage, Earliest Dwarf Erfurt Cauliflower, Dwarf Celery, Mammoth Red Celery, Kohl Rabi, Phinney's Water Melon, Green Citron, Dwarf Green Okra, Withersfield Onion, French Breakfast Radish, Trophy Tomato, and President Garfield Tomato.<sup>159</sup>

### REFINING THE MANSION GROUNDS, 1881-1890

By the 1880s, after years of careful development, the Mansion grounds had matured into a lush landscape that was a great source of joy and an integral part of daily life for Frederick Billings and his family, indeed as much a part of the family's living space as was the Mansion. When returning from a trip or season away, they were captivated by the beauty of the landscape, as Frederick noted in his diary one June 1st: "Up at 5. Sat at various windows to

drink in the glorious landscape—Everything is lovely—Grounds in perfect order—and such a verdure! Lilac & apple trees just in blossom—We have come at the right time." Even during the harsh winters, Frederick saw great beauty: "A wonderfully beautiful landscape—Therm. was down to about zero—a fog moistened the trees—and a white frost followed—and with the light off the snow on the branches, the trees looked celestial."<sup>160</sup>

In 1881, Frederick Billings's forced retirement from the presidency of the Northern Pacific Railroad freed him from many of his business worries and allowed him to devote renewed energy to his Woodstock home. He soon began a program of improvements for the entire Woodstock estate, encompassing the farm, forest, and Mansion grounds. Between 1883 and 1890, he added over 650 acres, bringing the total to approximately 1,100 acres by the time of his death in September 1890.<sup>161</sup> In 1884, Billings hired a new farm manager, George Aitken, who would guide the farm through its most prosperous and acclaimed years. During the 1880s, the farm operation rose in value from \$25,000 to \$121,230. By the end of the decade the farm employed 109 men at various times of the year, creating a substantial economic impact in the community and forwarding Frederick Billings's goal for it to serve as a model to area farmers. Reflecting Aitken's success, Frederick Billings had a model farmhouse constructed for him and his family in 1889-1890; it adjoined the farm buildings on Elm Street opposite the Croquet Ground.<sup>162</sup> [Figure 3.32]

Following his retirement, Frederick Billings also devoted renewed energy to his forest plantations and the subject of reforestation in general, working closely with George Aitken. By this time, he had reforested most of the old hill pastures on and near the Mansion grounds and was managing the adjoining woodlots, so he turned to the worn-out agricultural fields and pastures of the Dana farm on the west side of Mount Tom, which he purchased in 1884. Nursery receipts from this time reflect an active reforestation program, with at least twenty-eight thousand trees purchased between 1883 and 1887, both native and introduced species. These included Norway spruce, European





larch, Austrian pine, white spruce, European mountain ash, and white ash, along with smaller numbers of Douglas spruce, balsam fir, Russian mulberry, birch, and European alder.<sup>163</sup> As the *Vermont Standard* reported, through his forest plantations, which were open to the public, Mr. Billings “is teaching practical forestry to his neighbors. It is hoped they will learn the lesson to their own profit and that of posterity.”<sup>164</sup> Access to these plantations was through the mountain roads that began at the Mansion grounds.

Extensive improvements and extensions were made to the road system in the 1880s, including a spur to the South Peak of Mount Tom, which offered a panoramic view over Woodstock, completed in 1887. Frederick Billings’s forestry work was among the earliest in the country, even predating the famous Vanderbilt plantations at Biltmore, North Carolina begun in 1890. Billings’s work did not go unnoticed, however. In 1882, he was appointed to Vermont’s first forestry commission and was the primary author of the commission’s report on the condition of Vermont forests.<sup>165</sup>

The Mansion grounds also received much of Frederick Billings’s attention over the years following his retirement, yet he did little to alter the original landscape he had developed based on the 1869 Copeland plan, apparently never consulting another landscape designer. Significant changes to the Mansion grounds were few and largely architectural in scope.

**Figure 3.32: Panorama of the Mansion grounds and farm looking northwest from Woodstock village, c.1890. Woodstock Historical Society. At the right of the photograph of the farm buildings; note young forest plantations on the hill at the left of the photograph.**

### The Mansion Terrace

One of the first improvements that Frederick Billings undertook on the Mansion terrace following his retirement was the expansion of the Hothouses, a project he had been considering for several years.<sup>166</sup> In June 1882, he had Frederick Lord return to Woodstock to plan for extending the Rosary by fifty feet to provide space for growing camellias and to add a building to house a potting room and other workspace. Lord’s company, recently renamed Lord & Burnham, was doing its own architectural design by this time, including traditional architecture for greenhouse-related buildings.<sup>167</sup> Billings’s “Potting Room,” as the family called the building, was planned for the west end of the new greenhouse wing, known as the “Camellia House.” [Figure 3.33]

Billings was dissatisfied with the lack of simplicity in Lord & Burnham’s design, but work on the building commenced in July of 1882 while revisions were discussed.<sup>168</sup> Billings had Ehrick Rossiter, Julia Billings’s young architect nephew, come to Woodstock to assist.<sup>169</sup> By September, the design had been revised to Billings’s satisfaction, and the

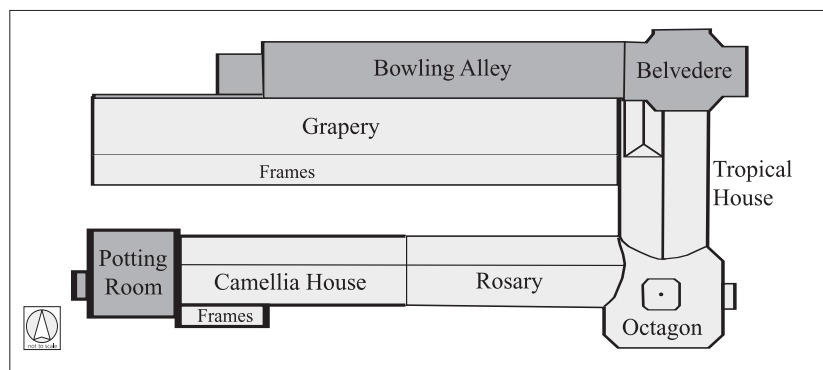


Figure 3.33: Plan of the Hothouses showing 1882 additions outlined in bold. SUNY ESF, based on Doton survey of 1887-1888. Dark gray indicates frame and brick buildings, light gray indicates greenhouses.

Potting Room and Camellia House were completed by October 1882. Despite all of his troubles with the design, Billings declared to his diary that the Potting Room was a “gem.” It was a one-and-a-half-story structure with a gable roof, a dormer on the south side, one-over-one double-hung sash windows, and half-timbering on the gable walls. [Figures 3.34] The east side led directly into the Camellia House, which matched the dimension and details of the connected Rosary.<sup>170</sup>

The completion of the Camellia House and Potting Room in fall 1882 marked the maximum extent of the greenhouse complex during Frederick Billings’s lifetime. There were, however, several minor changes made over the next few years. In 1884, the Hothouses were repainted, following the recommendation of Ehrick Rossiter. Rossiter apparently convinced Billings to change the exterior color of the greenhouses from a dark color (probably red) to white, perhaps to match the recently completed Camellia House, which Lord & Burnham had probably painted white in accordance with the most up-to-date standards of greenhouse design, which stressed the need for maximum light levels.<sup>171</sup>

Following completion of the extension to the Hothouses, Frederick Billings made some improvements to the adjoining landscape, where he established a naturalistic border of shrubs extending along the edge of the Mansion lawn between the Summerhouses and the Hothouses. A receipt from W. C. Strong’s Novantum Hill Nursery in 1884

listed shrubs that may have been planted in this area, including weeping cut-leaved birch, purple beech, weeping beech, Norway spruce, Siberian arborvitae, Austrian pine, blue spruce, *Retinospora* (relative of arborvitae), magnolia, and “50 shrubs in variety” (probably lilac, viburnum, and mock orange).<sup>172</sup> Billings may have planned this shrub border in part to provide a break between the Mansion lawn

and the Hothouse Hill to the west. These plantings also formed an extension of the rustic landscape that had been earlier planted around the Upper Summerhouse and the boulder. By the mid 1880s, these plantings had matured into a wild thicket that enveloped the Upper Summerhouse.<sup>173</sup> [Figure 3.35]

In 1885 after being retired as president from the Northern Pacific Railroad for several years, sixty-two year old Frederick Billings began a thorough remodeling of the Mansion, a project he probably had been planning for three years.<sup>174</sup> Exactly why Billings chose to undertake such a complete remodeling is not known, but it may have had to do with a change in use, or a desire to update architectural style. The house had weathered through fifteen years of raising seven children, and now had been serving for several years as a summer residence instead of its original design as a year-round dwelling. With its Stick-style detailing and relatively simple massing and ornamentation, the Mansion may have looked outdated by the mid 1880s, especially for an owner who had achieved significant wealth and prominence.

For the remodeling of the Mansion, Frederick Billing engaged the New York City architect Henry Hudson Holly (1834-1892). Billings knew Holly from his work in designing a chapel for the Congregational Church on Elm Street.<sup>175</sup> By the late 1870s and 1880s, Holly’s work was largely in the Queen Anne mode, which had developed in England during the 1860s as a revival of the transitional early Renaissance architecture of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.<sup>176</sup> Because of the extensiveness of the remodeling, the family moved out of the Mansion on



August 31, 1885 to a nearby house, and work began two days later. Much of the project was finished in 1886, but additional work on the verandah (or “piazza,” as Frederick Billings now called it) occurred in May and June of 1887.<sup>177</sup>

Holly produced a relatively restrained Queen Anne design, and Frederick Billings declared, after a rough design process, that he was “much impressed with its dignified beauty.”<sup>178</sup> [Figure 3.36, 3.37] While the old foundation and most of the walls, including those still remaining from the original 1807 house, were retained, the outward appearance was significantly changed through the addition of a full third floor, enlargement of the rear service wing and verandah, and the addition of gables, bay windows, and porches. Exterior ornamentation was limited largely to geometric and floral patterns on the bargeboards along the eaves, turned woodwork and scroll-

Figure 3.34: The Hothouses, with Potting Room addition visible in left background, c.1883. Billings Family Archives. The trim on the Octagon remains painted a dark color in this photograph.

Figure 3.35: View of the Upper Summerhouse looking toward the Mansion, 1886. Billings Family Archives. The Upper Summerhouse and adjoining iron fence is covered by dense plantings of trees, shrubs, and vines, including arborvitae, juniper, lilac, and Virginia creeper.





**Figure 3.36:** View of the front and north side of the Mansion following the Holly remodeling, c.1887. Billings Family Archives. The circular objects in the main side gable are terra-cotta date plaques. Note clipped arborvitae shrubs, probably planted in the early 1870s, and a pair of lamps with clear-glass lanterns newly installed by the front entrance.

cut Aesthetic-style sunflower motifs on the porch railings and posts, a Palladian-like window in a north gable, and geometric patterns in the bay window panels. Billings also had two commemorative terra-cotta plaques placed in the gables, one of which marked the year the original house was built (1806, the middle year of the 1805-1807 construction period), the other, the 1885 date for the beginning of the remodeling project. Although little was left of the original house, the 1806 plaque reflected Billings's strong sense of continuity with the past and the Marsh family in particular, while the 1885 one suggested his sense of permanency and stewardship for future generations. The house was painted in darker tones than it previously had been, including two tones of muted red for the brick walls and a combination of two greens and a brown for the trim.



**Figure 3.37:** View of the front and south side of the Mansion following the Holly remodeling, c.1887. Billings Family Archives.

Despite the comprehensive degree of architectural remodeling, Frederick Billings did not undertake a parallel program of major improvements to the surrounding grounds. By 1885, Copeland's naturalistic design had not gone out of style, and Billings may have been hesitant to change plantings that were just reaching maturity after years of care. Yet the remodeling did alter the landscape by better integrating it into the Mansion. The enlargement of the veran-

dah, addition or enlargement of porches and balconies on the second and third floors, and addition of broad bay windows above and to either side of the main entrance helped to bring the landscape into the house. Unlike the other large windows on the house, these bay windows featured modern single-light double-hung sashes, without any muntins to interfere with the view out across the front lawn and intervalle toward Blake Hill and Mount Peg to the east. [Figure 3.37]



Although there were no major improvements to the landscape as part of the Mansion remodeling, the project nonetheless did require disturbance to the grounds and adjustments to the landscape adjacent to the Mansion. In 1885 when construction first began, the farm staff recorded that they had begun “grading and working Mansion Grounds,” work that continued through October 1885.<sup>179</sup> The enlargement of the verandah, including the adjoining porte cochere, required construction of new footings and adjustment of the walks; a stone walk was laid from the west (rear) entrance of the Mansion at the end of October 1885.<sup>180</sup> The flowerbeds around the old verandah were removed and replaced with lawn, perhaps at the suggestion of Holly (all of Holly’s designs in *Modern Dwellings* featured houses without foundation beds). The front entrance was given new emphasis in the remodeling through the addition of a prominent set of curving verandah steps, in front of which were set a pair of gas lampposts with clear-glass globe-shaped lanterns, installed in June 1887. [Figure 3.36] Farther away from the Mansion, the landscape was not impacted: the carpet-bedding off the southwest corner of the house and directly in front of the main entrance was retained, as were the numerous clipped arborvitae shrubs along the walks and drives, and the beds

**Figure 3.38:** The Billings family and acquaintances on the lawn along the south side of the newly remodeled Mansion looking toward the Hothouses, 1887. Billings Family Archives. Note lack of foundation plantings along the house, lawn bed and clipped arborvitae behind the family, and informal tree and shrub border extending from the Summerhouses (beyond left edge of photograph) to the Hothouses.

along the tear-drop-shaped loop in the entrance drive, which were planted with mature deciduous shrubs and herbaceous plants. Head gardener George Mass continued to set tropical plants on the lawn and to plant the carpet beds with showy flowering annuals, such as cannas and begonias edged by alyssum.<sup>181</sup> [Figure 3.38]

A survey of the Mansion grounds completed between 1887 and 1888 by Hosea Doton and his successors documented that there were indeed no significant changes to the layout of the landscape as part of the Mansion remodeling project.<sup>182</sup> The placement and footprint of buildings, structures, drives, and paths all appear unchanged. [Figure 3.39] Two significant alterations, however, were made soon after the Mansion remodeling that were not recorded on the Doton survey. One was the raising of the Coachman’s Cottage about four feet in the fall of 1887, and the subse-

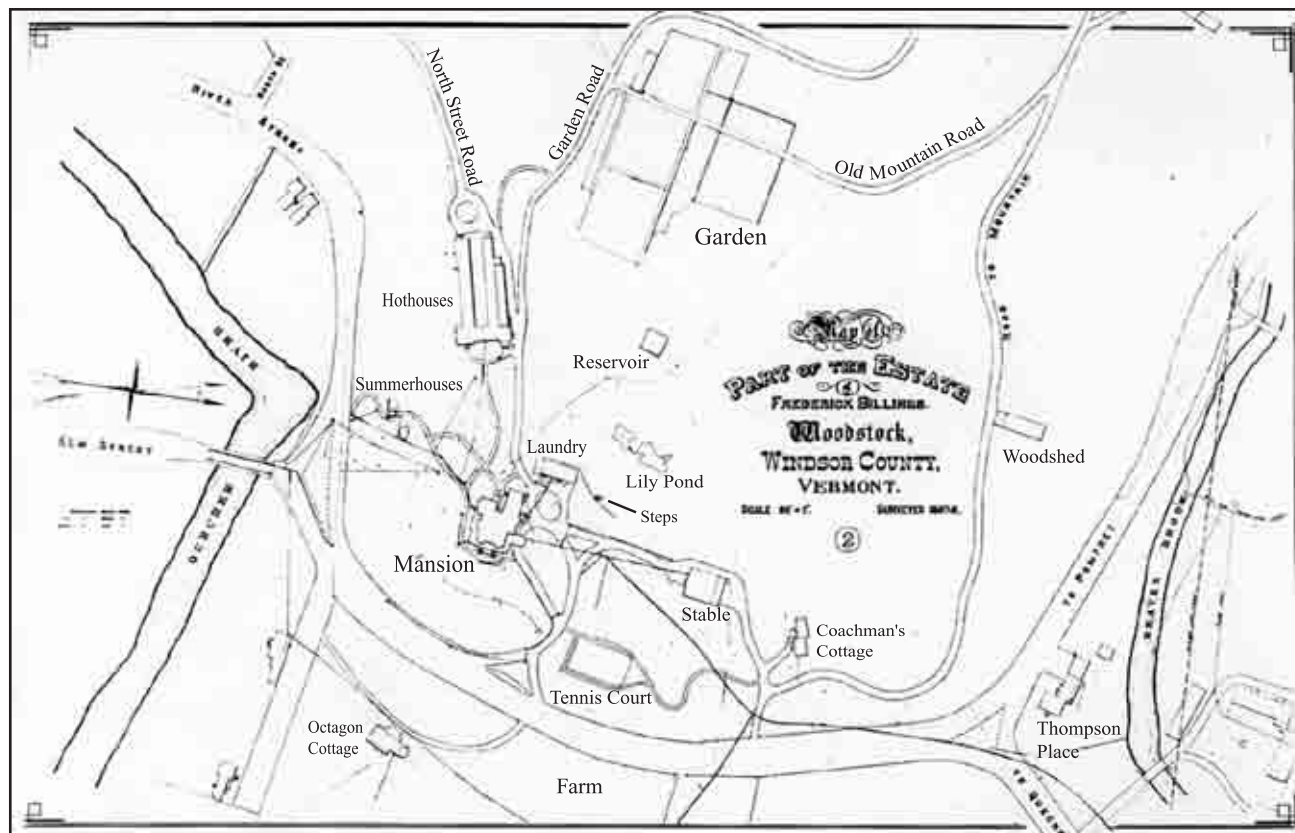


Figure 3.39: The Mansion grounds and adjoining property as surveyed by Hosea Doton and others, 1887-1888. Billings Family Archives; annotated by SUNY ESF. The lines indicate underground water, sewer, and gas pipes.

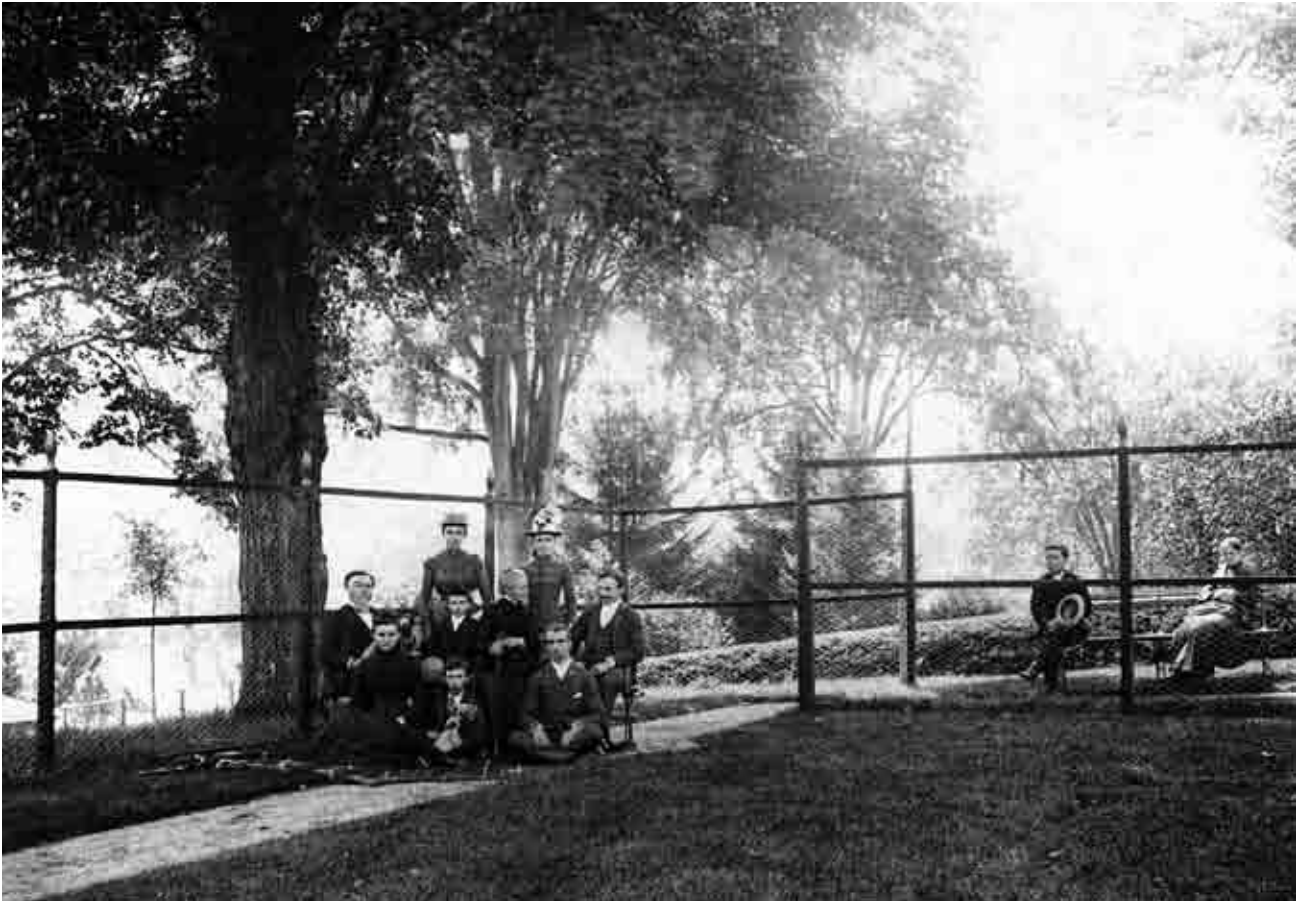
quent grading of the adjoining ground and paths.<sup>183</sup> Another change was the conversion of the Croquet Ground into a lawn tennis court. As early as June 1882, the Billings boys had set up a “tennis set” on the lawn, apparently outside the Croquet Ground, where croquet continued to be played. The Billings were early players of lawn tennis, although not as early as they had been with croquet. Lawn tennis had been invented in England in 1873 as an adaptation of court tennis; it was first played in the United States the following year. In 1881, the first American standardized rules were developed in New York by the U.S. National Lawn Tennis Association.<sup>184</sup>

From the initial tennis set, a permanent tennis court was established on the site of the Croquet Ground. It was laid out between August 1886 and July 1887; on July 24, 1887, Frederick Billings recorded that carpenters were “at work on Lawn tennis court fence,” and by July 28, the fence was being painted. The fence, about six feet high, was located on the outer edge of the perimeter paths and consisted of square wood posts with finials and three cross rails, across which was stretched chicken wire.<sup>185</sup> The tennis court was

visible from the head of the hedge-lined main entrance drive. [Figure 3.40]

### The Hill

As with the landscape of the Mansion terrace, Frederick Billings did not undertake a major program of improvements on the hill during his retirement years. The Doton survey of the Mansion grounds completed between 1887 and 1888 documented that by this time, the Garden looking much as Copeland had planned it consisted of two axial roads, one of which was a through road connecting to the old mountain road on the north. [Figure 3.39] Off this axis were a series of rectangular plots, some of which were defined by small roads or paths, as well as a bank of cold frames along the south side of the Garden.<sup>186</sup> At the time of the Doton survey, a substantial portion of the Garden was planted



with flowers such as alyssum, asters, gladioli, pansies, peonies, and pinks. On the bank along the north side of the Garden was a plantation of young sugar maples.<sup>187</sup> [Figure 3.41]

By the time a photograph of the Mansion grounds was taken in c.1890 from the peak of Mount Tom, the hillside plantations had matured considerably. [Figure 3.42] The most densely forested area in this view was the slope above the greenhouses, which had been planted with Norway spruce over fifteen years earlier.<sup>188</sup> Aside from the Garden, a few open areas still remained scattered across the hill, as Billings’s tree plantings were typically not in regular patterns, probably because of the rocky ground.

Between 1885 and 1888, Frederick Billings undertook substantial work on the hill to improve the estate’s water system, centered on the spring-fed Reservoir. In November 1885, pipe was laid through the hillside above the Mansion to provide the Stable and farm barns with

**Figure 3.40: The Billings family and acquaintances on the tennis court; view looking south with main entrance drive bordered by a clipped hemlock hedge in the background, 1887. Billings Family Archives. Note the graceful American elms and young Norway spruce also visible in the background. The family is under the shade of an old sugar maple, one that would have shaded the first Marsh house that once stood in this location.**

Reservoir water, and two years later, the pipe to the Mansion was replaced to increase capacity to the enlarged building.<sup>189</sup> The Reservoir itself was also in need of improvements. In July 1888, George Mass reported that the roof of the Reservoir was “breaking down,” and in October of 1888, a new, seven-foot-high iron gable roof with doors in the end walls was installed.<sup>190</sup>

With laying of the new water line from the Reservoir to the Stable and farm barns in 1885, Frederick Billings took the opportunity to convert a spring—fed boggy area on the hillside below the waterline into an ornamental pond. This was probably the location of an unreliable spring Charles



Figure 3.41: View in the Garden looking north toward the old mountain road, c.1890. Billings Family Archives. The identity of the woman is not known. In the right background is a young sugar maple plantation, with the old Marsh—era woodlot visible at the left

Figure 3.42: View looking east from Mount Tom over the Mansion grounds, illustrating reforestation on the hill at left, c.1890. Woodstock Historical Society. Also note Potting Room and Camellia House completed in 1882, and informal plantings between Summerhouses and Hothouses made in the 1880s. The Gardener's Cottage on North Street is the middle house at the bottom of the photograph.





Marsh had tried to tap in the 1790s.<sup>191</sup> By 1888, Billings had converted the boggy area into a set of two small connected ponds that the family called the “Lily Pond.” The Lily Pond was fed with Reservoir water, tapped off the new water line that ran to the Stable and farm barns.<sup>192</sup> [Figure 3.43] Water entered the Lily Pond at the northeast corner of the north pond, and drained through the middle of the south pond. The pond had tile lining and was retained by a dam along the south side of the north pond. Incoming water passed beneath a bridge made of a large stone slab; at the narrow neck between the two ponds, a rustic wooden bridge was built. [Figure 3.44] The Lily Pond was planted with water lilies and its edges soon became overgrown with wetland plants.<sup>193</sup> To reach the Lily Pond from the Mansion, a path led up the hillside from a stone wall and set of stone steps (which Copeland had shown in his 1869 plan for the

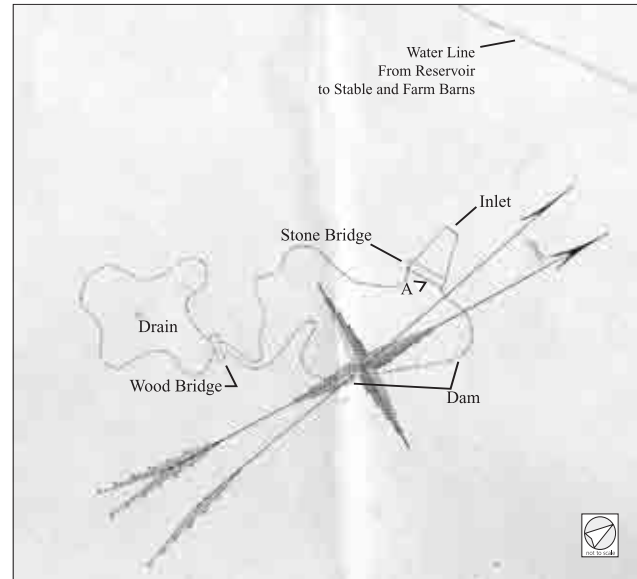


Figure 3.43: The Lily Pond, detail of the Doton survey completed in 1887-1888. Billings Family Archives; annotated by SUNY ESF. The symbol by the stone bridge indicates the spot from which the photograph in Figure 3.46 was probably taken. Footpaths and other minor features were not documented on the survey.

Figure 3.44: View of the rustic bridge on the Lily Pond looking south from the stone bridge with the hillside Norway spruce plantation in the background, c.1890. Billings Family Archives. Note the prolific cover of water lilies.



grounds) north of the Laundry.<sup>194</sup> [See Figure 3.39] Beyond the Lily Pond, the path probably extended through the naturalistic landscape of the hillside to the oak grove, Reservoir, and Garden.

## LANDSCAPE SUMMARY

By 1890, Frederick Billings had accomplished much of what he had set out to do at his Woodstock estate, reflecting the conservation philosophy of George Perkins Marsh and manifesting his conservation ideals derived from the picturesque romanticism of an industrial age, his childhood in rural Vermont, and his experience in the West. As he had recommended to area farmers in his 1864 speech at the Windsor County Fair, Frederick Billings had made the Mansion grounds a model of landscape design that represented a harmony between people and nature. With the help of R. M. Copeland, he had transformed the terrace and hill pastures adjoining the Marsh house into an idealized rural scene according to the style of English landscape gardening, with picturesque sublime and beautiful characteristics in its sweeping lawns, curving drives, rustic summerhouses, rocky outcroppings, and forests. Yet, as evidenced by his forest plantations and kitchen garden, the landscape was not all romance, but rather had a practical side that addressed improvement of the countryside through model conservation practices such as reforestation and scientific farming. With all three estate components—Mansion grounds, farm, and forest—Frederick Billings had created a comprehensive model of rural improvement that complemented his outright philanthropy to many religious, educational, and civic institutions. Prior to his death on September 30, 1890, Frederick Billings finalized his will perpetuating his conservation ideals through the remainder of Julia’s lifetime. It would provide general guidelines and financial means for the maintenance and continued improvement of the Woodstock home. Beyond the legal framework of the will, the family’s sentiment toward the landscape—a desire to perpetuate Frederick Billings’s ideals—would be the most powerful force for the long-term stewardship of the Mansion grounds.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Robin W. Winks, *Frederick Billings / A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 175. This work served as the main source of biographical information on Frederick Billings for this report.

<sup>2</sup> Winks, 8, 175.

<sup>3</sup> Julia Parmly Billings, “Autobiographical Notes” [hereafter, ‘JPB Autobiographical Notes’], entry for November 1863, Billings Family Archives [hereafter, ‘BFA’].

<sup>4</sup> Winks, 175.

<sup>5</sup> Winks, 147-48.

<sup>6</sup> The Northern Pacific was chartered by Congress in 1864 to connect Lake Superior in Minnesota with the Puget Sound in Oregon, and included along this route the largest single land grant ever awarded to a railroad. With all of this land to manage, Frederick Billings’s experience and reputation in California real estate and land settlement proved highly valuable in his position as railroad president. Winks, 187.

<sup>7</sup> Diary of Frederick Billings [hereafter, ‘FB diary’], 30 September 1887.

<sup>8</sup> Winks, 310.

<sup>9</sup> Andrew Jackson Downing, *Landscape Gardening and Rural Architecture* (New York: Dover, 1991 reprint of the 1865 sixth edition of the original 1841 publication), 18-19.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Morris Copeland, *Country Life* (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1859), 4.

<sup>11</sup> Winks, 274.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* Yosemite was set aside as a state preserve soon after Carleton Watkins took his photographs.

<sup>13</sup> “As I opened my window and looked out at the landscape, I said where is there a more beautiful place than Woodstock?” FB diary, 11 July 1885.

<sup>14</sup> McGrory Klyza and Trombulak, *The Story of Vermont*, 76-77.

<sup>15</sup> Winks, 275. As Billings biographer Robin Winks has noted, Billings singled out the following passage in his copy of *Man and Nature*: “Only for the sense of landscape beauty did unaided nature make provision. Indeed, the very commonness of this source of refined enjoyment seems to have deprived it of half its value.” Marsh did not

emphasize the importance of landscape beauty in *Man and Nature*, but in other works did cite it as a positive example of human improvement upon the natural world: “But in a well-tilled garden, what variety of fragrant flower and luscious fruit and nutritious bulb horticultural art derives from a few common and unsavory germs!” Quoted in Lowenthal, 298–99 (quote not from *Man and Nature*).

<sup>16</sup> Frederick Billings, Agricultural Speech at the Windsor County Fair, September 1864, BFA. Transcription by Janet Houghton, 4–7, Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park library [hereafter, ‘MABI’].

<sup>17</sup> Tamara Plakins Thornton, *Cultivating Gentlemen: The Meaning of Country Life among the Boston Elite, 1785–1860* (New Haven: Yale, 1989), 106–08. The place of Charles Marsh (Senior) was a gentleman’s farm, but because it served as a year-round home, would not have been known as a country place.

<sup>18</sup> Thornton, 22, 25, 33.

<sup>19</sup> Norman T. Newton, *Design on the Land: The Development of Landscape Architecture* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1971), 427. The Country-Place Era relates to the practice of developing country places, not to a specific style.

<sup>20</sup> Lewis Mumford, *The Brown Decades* (New York: Dover reprint of 1931 edition, 1955), 4–6.

<sup>21</sup> M. Christine Doell, *Gardens of the Gilded Age* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 4.

<sup>22</sup> Diary of Julia Parmly Billings [hereafter, ‘JPB diary’], 12 January 1872, BFA. Julia would have been long familiar with Central Park by this time because she grew up in New York City.

<sup>23</sup> Ann Leighton, *American Gardens of the Nineteenth Century* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 241–43.

<sup>24</sup> Brent Elliott, *Victorian Gardens* (Portland, Oregon: Timber Press, 1986), 185.

<sup>25</sup> May Brawley Hill, *Grandmother’s Garden* (New York: Abrams, 1995), 33.

<sup>26</sup> Henry Swan Dana, *The History of Woodstock 1761–1886* (Taftsville, Vermont: Countryman Press reprint of original 1889 edition, 1980), 549.

<sup>27</sup> Billings, Agricultural Speech at the Windsor County Fair, September 1864.

<sup>28</sup> Susanne Warren, National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form for “The Orchards,” 982 Mansion Drive, Bennington, Vermont, entered in the Register 3 March 2000.

<sup>29</sup> *Vermont Standard*, 1 November 1888. Quoted in Peter Jennison, epilogue to Henry Swan Dana’s *History of Woodstock* (Taftsville: Countryman Press, 1980), not paginated.

<sup>30</sup> The old wooden covered bridge had been swept away in a flood on October 4, 1869, so it was also necessary for Billings to quickly restore the connection between his newly acquired estate and the village. Dennis M. Zembala, “Elm Street Bridge.” Woodstock, Vermont: Woodstock National Historic District Commission, 1977 (reference courtesy of Janet Houghton, MABI).

<sup>31</sup> Despite the importance of these years in shaping the landscape, there remain few plans about its design, aside from the Copeland plan of 1869. Most information was derived from period photographs, deeds, and family diaries.

<sup>32</sup> Winks, 303.

<sup>33</sup> George Perkins Marsh would in fact never return to Woodstock. Frederick Billings wrote to him in 1874: “When are you coming to see me in your old home?” Frederick Billings to George Perkins Marsh, 3 October 1874, George Perkins Marsh Papers, carton 6, folder 36, University of Vermont.

<sup>34</sup> JPB diary, 15 & 24 February 1869.

<sup>35</sup> “Memorandum of agreement between Charles Marsh and Frederick Billings per the sale and purchase of the ‘Marsh Farm’ near Woodstock Green,” 24 February 1869, BFA; Woodstock Town Land Records, title deed, Charles Marsh to Frederick Billings, 17 March 1869, vol. 23, pages 358–59.

<sup>36</sup> *Vermont Standard*, 4 March 1869 (Janet Houghton Mac database, MABI).

<sup>37</sup> Little is known about Frederick Billings’s early involvement in the development of the estate prior to 1874 because his diaries from this period do not survive.

<sup>38</sup> Although Julia’s family was from New York and that was the city in which he worked, Frederick Billings engaged Boston architects and landscape gardeners for his initial plans. The reason why he chose designers from Boston is

not known, but it may have had to do with business or personal relationships and the traditional connection of eastern Vermont to the cultural influence of Boston.

<sup>39</sup> Mark Madison, “Landscapes of Stewardship: History of the Marsh-Billings Site” (Unpublished paper, 1999), 10-11, Billings Farm & Museum Library and Archives [hereafter, ‘BFM’].

<sup>40</sup> Doton surveys of the Frederick Billings Estate, map 3, BFA. Figures tallied in Sarah Wilcke et al., “Cultural Landscape Report for the Forest at Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park” (Conservation Study Institute and the University of Vermont, March 2000), 32-33.

<sup>41</sup> Woodstock Town Land Records, deeds, vol. 23, page 375; vol. 25, page 59.

<sup>42</sup> Daniel Nadenicek, “From Scientific Farming to Landscape Architecture” (Unpublished paper, c.2000), 8-9, BFM.

<sup>43</sup> Daniel Nadenicek, “Frederick Billings: A Theory and Practice of Land Management,” outline of paper, c.1999, 10-11, BFM; Daniel Nadenicek et al., “Copeland, Robert Morris,” in Charles Birnbaum and Robin Karson, *Pioneers of American Landscape Design* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2000), 68-70.

<sup>44</sup> There may have been some geographic reasons: Billings selected Boston-area architects, and perhaps they referred him to Copeland, a fellow Bostonian and probably the best-known landscape gardener there; Copeland also owned a home and quarries in Vermont. Nadenicek, 20.

<sup>45</sup> Robert Morris Copeland, *Country Life* (Boston: John P. Jewett and Company, 1859), 3-4.

<sup>46</sup> Copeland, R. M., “Estate of Frederick Billings” (plan for Mansion grounds, 1869), BFA.

<sup>47</sup> Copeland, *Country Life*, fold-out plan inside back cover.

<sup>48</sup> Copeland, *Country Life*, 86.

<sup>49</sup> Copeland, *Country Life*, 91.

<sup>50</sup> Copeland’s specific recommendations for treatment of the Billings lawn are not known; however, in *Country Life* he did stress the importance of thorough preparation in building a lawn, since it was not a feature native to the naturally dry climate. He called for creating drainage ditches and fortifying the soil with manure, common plaster, and a top dressing of “Peruvian Guano.” Copeland also did not recommend that all of the lawn on an estate be treated equally. In his prototypical plan, he specified that areas adjacent to the house be

maintained as lawn, while areas farther removed be treated as “ordinary grass land” planted with timothy, red-top, and clover. Copeland, *Country Life*, 88-89.

<sup>51</sup> Although Copeland apparently did not specify bedding plantings for the Billings plan, in *Country Life* he had earlier argued for a seemingly naturalistic approach: *Flowers are too often mixed confusedly, so that there is no distinct character obtained, and the eye gets no healthy excitement. Arrange your flowers always so that one decided color shall predominate in the whole, and also be massed in some particular place. . . Do not put your flowers in blotches, or formal masses, but introduce them with graceful irregularity.* Copeland, *Country Life*, 540.

<sup>52</sup> The plan called for a complex of three greenhouses arranged in a ‘T’-shaped plan: a large central pavilion with a gable front, identified as the “Plant House,” flanked by two half-span wings, one of which was a “Cold Grapery” and the other, a “Hothouse.” A small wing, probably a potting shed, was to extend off the rear of the Hothouse. Copeland was not unfamiliar with the design of greenhouses, as he included chapters on their construction and maintenance in his book, *Country Life*. Copeland, *Country Life*, 12-18.

<sup>53</sup> Copeland, *Country Life*, 190.

<sup>54</sup> JPB diary, 18 January 1870, 24 February 1870, 4 March 1870. Any revisions that may have been made to the 1869 plan, or Copeland’s specifications, do not survive in researched repositories.

<sup>55</sup> JPB diary, May-July 1870.

<sup>56</sup> JPB diary, 19 & 20 Marsh 1869.

<sup>57</sup> Charles Marsh to Caroline Crane Marsh, 31 July 1869, George Perkins Marsh Papers, carton 5, folder 46, University of Vermont, Burlington.

<sup>58</sup> JPB Autobiographical Notes, 21.

<sup>59</sup> Photographs, binder “Billings Estate: Mansion, Views,” BFM; McDill scrapbook A21, BFA; Barbara Yocum, draft preliminary historic structure report for the Mansion, May 2001, MABI.

<sup>60</sup> Photographs, Album 54, BFA; binder “Billings Estate: Mansion, Views,” BFM.

<sup>61</sup> Photographs, Woodstock Historical Society [hereafter, WHS] M-1466-0498; Albums 26, 47, BFA. A clear photograph of the Stable was not found.

<sup>62</sup> The first known mention of the Coachman's Cottage was made in 1877. FB diary, 13 April 1877. The Coachman's Cottage is today called the "Double Cottage."

<sup>63</sup> Woodstock Town Land Records, deeds, vol. 19, pages 59 & 123, vol. 24, page 474, vol. 25, page 59.

<sup>64</sup> Little information remains on the schedule of improvements to the Mansion terrace, but the family's diaries do provide several important clues that indicate the work continued on through the next four to five years.

<sup>65</sup> Little documentation exists to verify that the first Marsh house is the present Octagon Cottage. However, Julia Lee McDill, the daughter of Laura Billings Lee, recollected in 1992: "The [Octagon] Cottage was the original Farm House and where grandfather bought the farm from Mr. Marsh. It was where your tennis court is now. Mother said she could remember it being there. Grandfather had it moved down to where it is now, but it continued to be the Farmhouse. The octagon room was the milkroom." Julia Lee McDill to Mary F. Rockefeller, 13 September 1992, BFA.

<sup>66</sup> Janet Houghton, "Local Gazetteer: Names of Buildings Now and Formerly Located on the Billings Family Property..," c.1986, updated 2002. MABI.

<sup>67</sup> Letter, Elizabeth Allen to Frederick Billings, 8 September 1869, BFA.

<sup>68</sup> c.1875 photograph showing trees in depressions in front lawn, McDill scrapbook, BFA A21.

<sup>69</sup> John C. Dana, "Recollections of the Life of G. P. Marsh, *Vermont Standard*, 9 June 1921, cited in Houghton Mac database, "Estate Stone Wall" file, MABI; FB diary, 7 & 14 June 1875, 21 August 1875, 10 September 1875, 28 November 1877, 6 June 1878.

<sup>70</sup> Graphic documentation of the utilities on the Mansion grounds is first recorded in Hosea Doton et al., "Map of Part of the Estate of Frederick Billings," map 1, surveyed 1887-1888, BFA.

<sup>71</sup> The earliest reference to "hydrants:" FB diary, 19 October 1874.

<sup>72</sup> JPB diary, 1 November 1906. The well house is visible in a panoramic photograph of Mansion grounds, c.1875, E-208, WHS, Figure 3.16.

<sup>73</sup> Although information on when individual lamps were added is not known, Billings did not complete the grounds lighting all at once. In October, 1874, for example, Billings

was digging a line for a lamppost to be added at the north-east corner of the house. FB diary, 14 October 1874.

<sup>74</sup> "Strengthening water-bars on avenues." FB diary, 16 November 1885.

<sup>75</sup> Doton survey, map 1; FB diary, 26 June 1874.

<sup>76</sup> By September 1870, Billings was completing work on a sidewalk linking the Mansion grounds with the village along Elm Street, going over the new iron Elm Street bridge. JPB diary, 2 & 10 September 1870.

<sup>77</sup> JPB diary, 9 March 1873, 28 April 1873. In both entries, Julia refers to "summerhouse" in the singular.

<sup>78</sup> Stereograph of the Summerhouses by Henry Cushing, c.1875, BFA. On August 4, 1876, Frederick Billings first refers in his diary to summerhouses in the plural; on 12 April 1877, he refers to the "lower summer house." The designer of the Summerhouses is not known; some evidence does suggest it may have been the architect Detlef Lienau, who was working at the same time on the Belvedere and Hothouses. Lienau did design buildings in the rustic style. Iron railings and a set of stone steps were added around the terrace of the Upper Summerhouse in the fall of 1877. FB diary, 13 November 1877.

<sup>79</sup> E. R. Gates, photograph of the greenhouses showing path, c.1874, P22, BFA.

<sup>80</sup> *Encyclopedia Americana* (1999), s.v. "Croquet."

<sup>81</sup> JPB diary, 29 June 1872: "The Rossiters played some games of croquet." This is the earliest reference to the croquet ground; JPB diary, 11 July 1872. No photographs of the croquet ground from this period have been found.

<sup>82</sup> FB diary, 22 November 1876: "Mass [head gardener after 1875] putting on mulch by laundry & play ground & by library." During the 1870s, flowerbeds were made specifically for the children, perhaps near the playground. FB diary, 4 June 1877: "Childrens flower beds made & hung screen doors."

<sup>83</sup> JPB diary, 1 July 1870, 21 May 1872.

<sup>84</sup> FB diary, 4 June 1875, 15 October 1875. With so much thin, rocky topsoil, the formal lawn proved difficult to maintain. In April 1877, Frederick Billings began a series of improvements to create more hospitable conditions by removing stones, fortifying the soil with loam, and laying down sod between the elm trees. The whole project took a total of four weeks and one day. Even after this work was done,

there still remained problem sections, and in May of the following year, Frederick Billings had the head gardener blast away bedrock on the lawn in front of the Mansion, near the formal entrance drive. In the end, over two additional weeks were spent on improving the lawn. FB diary, 23 April 1877; 1, 12, 14, 19, 21 May 1877; 13, 17, 18 May 1878.

<sup>85</sup> FB diary, 19 October 1874. This is the first record of lawn seats.

<sup>86</sup> FB diary, 18 June 1877.

<sup>87</sup> The first mention of the flowerbeds around the Mansion was found in 1874 diaries. Julia mentions that Mr. Grant was planting “new” flowerbeds. JPB diary, 6 June 1874; FB diary, 1-3 & 8 June 1874.

<sup>88</sup> An antique wire basket survives in collection storage of the National Historical Park. The basket is about four or five feet in the long dimension, with a simple woven diaper pattern finished as repeated scallops along the top rim, and with exposed prongs along the base to anchor it into the turf or bed soil. No photographs or other documentation of this basket in use on the Mansion lawn has been found.

<sup>89</sup> These potted plants, which included palms and dracaenas, appeared on the lawns around the time the Hothouses were completed in 1874. FB diary, 11 June 1874.

<sup>90</sup> Photographs of the Mansion, c.1875: A21 (McDill scrapbook), BFA; “Mansion Views” binder, BFM. The resolution in these photographs is insufficient to show specific plant varieties.

<sup>91</sup> JPB diary, 23 May 1871.

<sup>92</sup> Photograph of Mansion, c.1875, A21 (McDill scrapbook), BFA.

<sup>93</sup> Photograph of Mansion grounds, c.1878, M-1466-0498, WHS. The hemlock hedge also shows up in an 1887 photograph of the family in the tennis court, P22, BFA. This hedge would later be extended along the perimeter of the Mansion lawn.

<sup>94</sup> JPB diary, 9 March 1873, 7 May 1873.

<sup>95</sup> FB diary 30 October 1874.

<sup>96</sup> Billings ordered 100 Norway spruce and 100 hemlock from Strong Nursery of Brighton, Massachusetts, “for future use” following his large planting of 600 evergreens on the slope behind the Hot houses. FB diary, 27 August 1874; photograph of Mansion grounds, c.1878, M-1466-

0498, WHS. The hemlock hedge also shows up in an 1887 photograph of the family in the tennis court, P22, BFA.

<sup>97</sup> Billings had the head gardener “set out evergreens & shrubs on bank looking at bridge.” FB diary, 3 May 1876; FB diary, 12 & 17 April 1877; photographs, c.1878 view of Mansion grounds, M-1466-0498, WHS; c.1878 view of the Mansion, McDill scrapbook, A21, BFA.

<sup>98</sup> Downing, *Landscape Gardening*, 258, 259; quoted in Leighton, 366.

<sup>99</sup> JPB diary, 5 May 1873, FB diary 3 June 1874, etc. During this time, “greenhouse” and “hothouse” were terms in general use for glazed structures used for growing plants. The term “hothouse” was also used for a greenhouse designed to force plants into bloom through artificial heat.

<sup>100</sup> This firm, which was only listed in Boston directories for one year (1870), was comprised of three architects: Horatio F. Faulkner, George R. Clarke, and Morris Dorr. Faulkner, Clarke, & Dorr Architects, 23 & 24 Studio Building, Tremont St., Boston, Mass, “Green House for F. Billings Esq. Woodstock Vt.,” 3 sheets, BFA.

<sup>101</sup> JPB diary, 22 July 1872, 23 July 1872, 9 August 1872; “Our Merchant Princes. James B. Williams.” *Springfield (Mass.) Republican* [?], December 1873, clipping in BFA.

<sup>102</sup> Letter, James B. Williams to Frederick Billings, 16 September 1872, BFA.

<sup>103</sup> Kramer, Ellen W. “Detlef Lienau, An Architect of the Brown Decades,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, vol. XIV (March 1955), 1, 18-19.

<sup>104</sup> While no graphic documentation of Detlef Lienau’s work on the greenhouse complex survives, Billings family correspondence does provide further evidence of his involvement and a general account of how the project was designed and built. The Lienau Collection at Avery Library of Columbia University is the primary collection of Lienau papers, although it is incomplete. It contains no entries for Frederick Billings. The Lord & Burnham papers at the New York Botanical Garden also contain nothing on this 1872-1873 project; the files for Frederick Billings were purportedly destroyed in a fire at the company offices.

<sup>105</sup> Julia Billings also mentions the involvement of Lord. She wrote in her diary in May of 1873 that “Lenau [sic] & Lord spent the day in discussing the hot house.” JPB diary, 2 May 1873, 3 May 1873.

<sup>106</sup> John Auwaerter, "Factories of Glass: Development of the Modern Commercial Greenhouse, 1880-1930" (Masters thesis, Cornell University, 1992), 219.

<sup>107</sup> Williams to Billings, 16 September 1872; FB diary, 8, 15, and 26 October 1875.

<sup>108</sup> Andrew Jackson Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses* (New York: Dover reprint of 1850 edition, 1969), 124.

<sup>109</sup> Julia Billings wrote in her diary in July of 1873 that the family had a "picnic" in the Belvedere. JPB diary, 4 July 1873; article in St. Paul and Minneapolis *Pioneer Press*, 19 September 1880, clipping, BFA.

<sup>110</sup> *Pioneer Press*, 19 September 1880. The walnut-finished Bowling Alley ran the length of the first floor, except for an area that served as a potting room, probably at the west end or perhaps in the basement.

<sup>111</sup> FB diary, 1 September 1874, 17 July 1884; Hosea Doton, survey of the Billings Estate, sheet 1, 1887-1888, BFA.

<sup>112</sup> *Pioneer Press*, 19 September 1880; FB diary, 25 August 1876.

<sup>113</sup> FB diary, 6 May 1881; E. R. Gates, photograph of Hothouses looking east, c.1875, P29, BFA; Panoramic photograph of Woodstock, c.1895, E-201, WHS.

<sup>114</sup> JPB diary, 25 August 1873; E. R. Gates, photograph of Hothouses looking west, c.1875, P29, BFA.

<sup>115</sup> FB diary, 5 May 1873, 25 June 1874; 13 July 1874.

<sup>116</sup> FB diary, 10 December 1877, 12 November 1879.

<sup>117</sup> Doton survey 1887-1888, map 3, BFA; FB diary, 9 July 1888; Doton field survey, c.1885, BFA.

<sup>118</sup> ". . . we [Mary, Fanny, and Julia] took a walk in our woods by the new road & home by the old & the hot house." JPB diary, 12 October 1872. The "new road" apparently corresponds with the present main road up Mount Tom that passes the Woodshed; the "old" refers to the road past the Belvedere and up to the Garden (later Upper Meadow).

<sup>119</sup> Wilcke, 60.

<sup>120</sup> JPB diary, 19 July 1874.

<sup>121</sup> FB diary, 2 & 11 June 1874, 27 October 1874. No documentation has been found on the actual building of the kitchen garden.

<sup>122</sup> FB diary, 27 & 31 August 1874; panoramic photograph of Mansion grounds, c.1875, M-1466, WHS; Billings ordered

100 Norway spruce and 100 hemlock from Strong Nursery of Brighton, Massachusetts, "for future use" following his large planting of 600 evergreens on the slope behind the Hothouses. FB diary, 27 August 1874.

<sup>123</sup> Estate Inventory, "Buildings on Property," 1 October 1890, BFA; George Aitken to Miss Billings, 19 December 1894, Aitken Correspondence, BFM; Mary Montagu Billings French diary, 14 August 1943; Houghton, "Local Gazetteer," 3; photograph E-208, WHS.

<sup>124</sup> C.1878 photograph, E-208, WHS; examination of existing plantation, 2001; FB diary, 27 August 1874

<sup>125</sup> FB diary, 25 June 1874, 6 & 27 July 1875.

<sup>126</sup> FB diary, 11 October 1874; Frederick Billings to George Perkins Marsh, 3 October 1874, carton 6, folder 36, George Perkins Marsh Papers, University of Vermont, Burlington.

<sup>127</sup> FB diary, 5 July 1875, 14 August 1875. Mass died in 1932.

<sup>128</sup> FB diary, 12 October 1877, 2 March 1882, 8 April 1886, 15 May 1888.

<sup>129</sup> FB diary, 2 June 1882; letter, Julia Parmly Billings to Parmly Billings, 21 January 1880.

<sup>130</sup> FB diary, 4 December 1874; photograph, c.1875, E-208, WHS.

<sup>131</sup> FB diary, 30 June 1873, 28 October 1875, 9 July 1877, 2 July 1878.

<sup>132</sup> FB diary, 31 July 1876, 13 August 1876.

<sup>133</sup> Wilcke, 32.

<sup>134</sup> Edgar Mead, *Over the Hills to Woodstock*, quoted in Madison, "Landscapes of Stewardship," 65.

<sup>135</sup> JPB diary, 9 December 1872; letter, Julia Parmly Billings to Parmly Billings, 21 January 1880, BFA; JPB Autobiographical Notes, 24 February 1874, 29 September 1875, 31 March 1881.

<sup>136</sup> For example, *Vermont Standard*, 3 November 1887.

<sup>137</sup> Receipt, Joseph Brick & Sons to F. N. Billings, 5 May 1882; Peter Henderson to F. N. Billings, 17 June 1887; Cowan & Co., 19 December 1888, BFM.

<sup>138</sup> FB diary, 9 June 1874, 21 October 1874, 15 October 1875; 24, 25, 27, 28 April 1876, 3 May 1876, 8 June 1876, 9 & 22 November 1876, 28 May 1877, 12 June 1882, 16 May 1885, 9 June 1888.

<sup>139</sup> Billings most frequently purchased from Peter Henderson & Co., W. C. Wilson, Thorburn & Titus, R. H. Allen, and Carson & Co. (later Cowan & Co.), all of New

York City; Hallock & Son of Queens; Henry A. Dreer and Joseph Beck & Sons of Philadelphia; Rob't J. Halliday of Baltimore, Hovey & Co. of Boston; W. C. Strong's Novantum Hill Nursery of Brighton, Massachusetts; C. E. Allen of Brattleboro, Vermont; and H. P. Closson of Thetford, Vermont. Receipts, BFM.

<sup>140</sup> Receipt, Carson & Co., 1 October 1884; Hallock, Son & Thorpe, 11 November 1885; Henry Dreer, 29 November 1887.

<sup>141</sup> The types of bedding plants are not known, because the seed orders generally provided only a general listing, such as "Hardy Annual Flower Seeds 50 var." Receipt, Carson & Co., 8 February 1884, BFM.

<sup>142</sup> Receipts, Carson & Co., 6 June 1884, 7 April 1887, 25 April 1888; Wm. J. Steward, 10 May 1888; William Dreer, 4 May 1888; H. P. Closson, 9 May 1883, BFM.

<sup>143</sup> FB diary, 9 August 1883.

<sup>144</sup> See, for example, *Vermont Standard*, 2 February 1883; JPB diary, 8 November 1890.

<sup>145</sup> *Vermont Standard*, 20 July 1882. Clipping in Miller scrapbook, vol. 3, 27, BFA.

<sup>146</sup> Receipts, Hovey & Co., 9 October 1882; W. C. Wilson, 12 September 1887, BFM.

<sup>147</sup> St. Paul and Minneapolis *Pioneer Press*, 19 September 1880, A31, BFA. It is not known why this paper had a reporter in Woodstock, or why it ran this article.

<sup>148</sup> *Jersey Bulletin* (Indianapolis), 26 August 1885, clipping in BFA.

<sup>149</sup> Ulysses P. Hendrick, *Manual of American Grape Growing* (New York: MacMillan, 1924), 192-203; FB diary, 6 May 1881.

<sup>150</sup> "Planted cantelope [sic] seed on grape border." FB diary, 25 April 1877.

<sup>151</sup> Already in 1877, three years after it had been built, Frederick Billings was having the interior of the Grapery repainted. FB diary, 15 October 1875, 9 November 1875, 21 November 1876; 3, 7, 12 September 1877. Billings relied on the original builders and manufacturers for major repair work—Hitchings & Company for the heating system, Lord & Burnham for the greenhouse structures. Receipts from Hitchings & Company and Lord & Burnham, 1881-1899, BFM.

<sup>152</sup> FB diary, 13, 14, 17, 23, 27 April 1877, 31 May 1877, 10 May 1879, 12 November 1879, 30 June 1883; Billings Farm Memo Diary, April 1880.

<sup>153</sup> The old woodshed may have been located on the hillside west of the Hothouses, closer to the Marsh farm buildings. "Cut hay on hill by woodshed," FB diary, 31 August 1875; ". . . dug ditch upper side of old woodshed to keep water off." FB diary, 26 November 1878.

<sup>154</sup> FB diary, 6 & 7 June 1876; Mary Jo Llewellyn, "Architectural Conservation Assessment Report for the Woodshed" (January 2001), 7-10.

<sup>155</sup> FB diary, 31 May 1877.

<sup>156</sup> Two documented changes included a small extension of the Garden east toward the Mansion in November 1875 and the installation of culverts and drainage ditches in 1877 and 1878. FB diary, 8 November 1875, 2 & 3 May 1876, 13 April 1877, 25 June 1877, 5 November 1877, 17 August 1878, 16 September 1878.

<sup>157</sup> *Pioneer Press*, 19 September 1880.

<sup>158</sup> FB diary, 10 November 1875, 26 April 1876, 2 May 1876, 10 & 11 April 1877, 2 & 23 May 1877, 5 & 16 June 1877, 14 July 1881, 6 July 1882, 2 July 1883, 9 August 1883, 28 July 1884.

<sup>159</sup> Receipt, Carson & Co., 8 February 1884, BFM. The amount and specialized variety of vegetable and flower seeds on this order suggest that they were intended for the Mansion grounds Garden, not for the farm garden or for farm crops.

<sup>160</sup> FB diary, 1 June 1883, 31 January 1877.

<sup>161</sup> Wilcke, 31-32 (statistics compiled from Doton surveys).

<sup>162</sup> Billings farm expense summaries and Agricultural Census records, cited in Madison, "Models and Morals," 15, 23.

<sup>163</sup> Receipts, W. C. Strong to Billings, 29 May 1883; Waukegan Nurseries to Billings, 2 November 1886, 18 April 1887, 17 October 1887, BFM.

<sup>164</sup> *Vermont Standard*, 14 May 1885; Madison, "Models and Morals," 16, 26.

<sup>165</sup> Daniel Nadenicek, "Frederick Billings: The Intellectual And Practical Influences On Forest Planting, 1823 - 1890" (Draft paper, 2003), 63. MABI.

<sup>166</sup> In 1879, Billings contacted Lord's Horticultural Works to plan improvements to the Hothouses, but did not undertake the work at the time—probably because of his preoccupation with business affairs—except to install a second layer of glass on the north side of the Rosary to reduce heat loss. FB diary, 21 August 1879.

<sup>167</sup> Lord & Burnham sent a revised design for the Potting



Room in late June 1882, but Billings was still dissatisfied, especially with their complex roof design. Perhaps for Frederick Billings's Potting Room they were trying to match the detail found on the Belvedere, but Billings was apparently looking for a more utilitarian structure, and one that would not cause snow and ice to fall on the adjoining Camellia House, a reasonable concern for the Vermont climate. Frederick Billings to Lord & Burnham, 23 June 1882, New York Botanical Garden.

<sup>168</sup> “Dear Sirs, I have this afternoon, yours enclosing sketch of the addition to the Rosary and the “Potting Room.” My impression is, it would be well to make the Potting Room a little more simple. Yours very truly, Frederick Billings.” Frederick Billings to Mssrs. Lord & Burnham, 19 June 1882, New York Botanical Garden. The sketch to which Billings was responding does not survive.

<sup>169</sup> On August 14, he decided to lengthen the building 5 feet, requiring the reconstruction of the foundation. On August 20, Billings recorded: “Telegraphed Lord to come here—Stopped work on potting room—as roof doesn't please me.” Rossiter made a “change in rear roof of potting room [which] made it all right.” FB diary, 22 July 1882; 7, 14, 15, 20, 21, 29, August 1882, 28 September 1882.

<sup>170</sup> FB diary, 29 August 1882; photograph of Hothouses with Potting Room in background, c.1885, P22, BFA.

<sup>171</sup> FB diary, 9 July 1884 et seq.: “Ehrick Rossiter here on morning train—He changed orders about painting wh. will improve effects but I regret the red roofs.” 12 July: “Painting of Hot house goes slowly—at work on grapery.” 16 July: “Painters finished outside of grapery.” 17 July: “Painters on stove house & Octagon.”

<sup>172</sup> Photograph of Billings family with Hothouses in background, 1887, P22, BFA; Receipt, W. C. Strong, 25 April 1884, BFM.

<sup>173</sup> Photograph of Summerhouses, c.1876, P29, BFA; Photograph, “Summer House, Billings Place, 1886,” P22, BFA.

<sup>174</sup> Frederick Billings may have begun thinking about renovating the Mansion as early as August 1882, the year after his retirement. At this time, Billings noted that architect Holly, who was in town for the Congregational Church chapel project, “took measurements at the house.” It was

not until 1885, however, that Billings decided to progress the remodeling project, and by July he had plans in hand and was discussing them with Julia. Barbara Yocum, “The Mansion / Preliminary Historic Structure Report” (draft report prepared by the National Park Service, June 2001), 30, MABI.

<sup>175</sup> This \$12,000 project was commissioned by Billings in 1880 as a memorial to his parents. Dana, *History of Woodstock*, 439.

<sup>176</sup> Michael Tomlan, ed., *Country Seats & Modern Dwellings: Two Victorian Domestic Architectural Stylebooks by Henry Hudson Holly*, (Watkins Glen, New York: combined edition, 1977), Introduction. The Mansion remains one of only a very few of Holly's many commissions that have survived intact to the present.

<sup>177</sup> FB diary; 2 September 1885, 6 May 1887, 8 June 1887.

<sup>178</sup> Janet Houghton, “The Billings Mansion,” (unpublished paper, 1977), 9; MABI; FB diary, 10 June 1886.

<sup>179</sup> Billings Farm Memo Diary, September and October 1885.

<sup>180</sup> FB diary, 31 October 1885.

<sup>181</sup> FB diary, 24 June 1887, 9 June 1888, 6 September 1888, 4 June 1889, photograph of family on south side of Mansion, 1887, P22, BFA; c.1887 photograph of south and east front of Mansion, P22, BFA; c.1887 view of north side of Mansion, McDill scrapbook; “Summerhouse Billings Place 1886,” P22, BFA.

<sup>182</sup> Doton survey, maps 2, BFA.

<sup>183</sup> FB diary, 23 & 24 September 1887; 11, 14, 24 October 1887. No information has been found on why the building was raised four feet; perhaps it had to do with moisture from a spring on the hillside, which by this date had been incorporated into a lily pond, probably stopping the moisture problem.

<sup>184</sup> FB diary, 16 June 1882; JPB diary, 16 June 1882; *Encyclopedia Americana* (1999) s.v. “Tennis.”

<sup>185</sup> FB diary, 13 August 1886, 25 & 28 July 1887, 16 June 1882; photograph of Billings family in tennis court, 1887, P22, BFA.

<sup>186</sup> Doton survey, map 2.

<sup>187</sup> Photographs of woman in Garden, c.1890, Album 64, BFA.

<sup>188</sup> Photograph E-206, c.1890, WHS.

<sup>189</sup> FB diary, 12 November 1885; Billing Farm Memo Diary, November 1887.

<sup>190</sup> FB diary, 9 July 1888, 9 August 1888, 5 & 20 October 1888.

<sup>191</sup> Julia Billings apparently continued to refer to the Lily Pond as “the spring.” She entered in her diary, “We said good bye before going up the Hill w. Harriet. She & Lil found the Japanese lilies [water lilies?] doing well & there was plenty of water in the spring.” JPB diary, 15 July 1901.

<sup>192</sup> Doton survey, map 2 (1887-1888). In an article about Frederick Billing’s improvements at the estate published in 1890, the *Vermont Standard* wrote of a “lily pond” on the hillside.” *Vermont Standard*, 14 August 1890. Very little documentation exists about the development of the Lily Pond.

<sup>193</sup> The Doton survey documents two bridges at the Lily Pond, one at the northwest corner and one between the ponds. Work on the Lily Pond in the 1890s documented the existence of the dam and tile lining. George Aitken wrote to Laura Billings on 15 April 1895: “The tile from the Lily Pond, as I expected when it was put in [eight years earlier?], could not accommodate all the water, consequently it ran over the dam, but the grass had such a good hold it did no damage,” BFM; Billings Farm Memo diary, May 1894: “Repairing dam at Lily Pond.”

<sup>194</sup> These steps are shown on the Copeland plan (1869).



Cultural Landscape Report  
for the Mansion Grounds

Frederick Billings Era  
1869-1890

Mansion Lawn Detail

Figure 3.46

**SOURCES**

Estate of Frederick Billings, maps 1 & 2 (Doton et al., 1887-88)  
Contours on Property of Mary F. Rockefeller (Williams, 1956)  
Topo. Plan Mansion Grounds (Bruno, 2001)

**NOTES**

All vegetation shown in approximate scale and location. Names indicated are those used during the period, when known. Plan illustrates conditions in 1890.

**LEGEND**

- |  |                       |  |                      |  |            |
|--|-----------------------|--|----------------------|--|------------|
|  | Added during period   |  | Conifer plantation   |  | Stone wall |
|  | Assumed feature       |  | Conifer tree/shrub   |  | Fence/gate |
|  | Removed during period |  | Deciduous tree/shrub |  | Hydrant    |
|  | 10' contour           |  | Herbaceous bed       |  | Lamppost   |
|  | Unpaved road/path     |  | Rock outcropping     |  | Bench      |

**DRAWN BY**

John Auwaerter Illustrator 10, 2004





#### IV. THE ESTATE ERA, 1890-1914

Three months before he died in 1890, Frederick Billings made the last adjustments to his will, accompanied by his wife Julia and eldest surviving child, Laura. By this time, he owned over eleven hundred acres in and around Woodstock, but this was only a small part of a much larger estate that included, in addition to financial assets, the other family home on Madison Avenue in New York City, and large tracts of real estate along the Northern Pacific Railroad corridor from Superior, Wisconsin to San Francisco. Yet it was the Woodstock home—the farm, forest, and Mansion grounds—that Billings treated with special care in his will. Woodstock would be kept as the family home and a model farm for the remainder of Julia’s lifetime, and Frederick Billings hoped, for generations to come.<sup>1</sup>

Between 1890 and 1914, the Woodstock estate was stewarded, in conjunction with the farm manager and estate trustees, largely by Julia Billings and her three daughters Laura, Mary Montagu, and Elizabeth.<sup>2</sup> [Figure 4.1] Within this quarter-century, the Billings women oversaw significant additions and improvements to the estate. They updated the Mansion grounds to reflect new design ideals for the industrial age, yet at the same time preserved the overall character that Frederick Billings over the previous twenty-five years had, in his words, “so cherished and developed, and where the family have had so many happy years, with sorrowful experiences too.”<sup>3</sup>

#### ORGANIZATION OF THE ESTATE OF FREDERICK BILLINGS

The large amounts of property and sizeable worth of Frederick Billings’s legal estate, estimated at twenty million dollars, warranted that he designate executors and trustees to oversee its management. He named three: two brothers,

Oliver P. C. Billings of New York City and Franklin N. Billings of Woodstock, and his trusted personal secretary, Samuel E. Kilner of Dobbs Ferry, New York, working out of an estate office at 120 Broadway, New York City. Frederick Billings’s will specified that his estate remain intact for the duration of Julia’s lifetime. The will was remarkable at the time for its long-range perspective and lack of specific directions; he left much of the detailed management to his trustees and family.<sup>4</sup> Upon Julia’s death, the estate was to be divided among the children.



Figure 4.1: The Billings women, 1896. From left: Elizabeth, Mary Montagu, Julia, and Laura. Billings Family Archives.

For the family’s two homes—the one in New York City (identified in the will as the “city home”) and the one in Woodstock (the “country home”)—Frederick Billings was more specific about his wishes for care and management. The city home, at 279 Madison Avenue, was to remain the property of Julia, who would be provided with funds necessary for its care and improvement. For the Woodstock home, Frederick Billings specified that it “shall be kept as the common estate of all, and maintained and improved out of my general estate until a division among the heirs takes place.” The trustees were ultimately responsible for the Woodstock estate; however, it was

placed under the immediate supervision of Laura Billings, working closely with the farm manager, George Aitken, and estate trustee Samuel Kilner, who acted as comptroller.<sup>5</sup> It was unusual in late-nineteenth-century society, and a reflection of Frederick Billings's progressive views, that he placed ownership and control of the two family homes under his wife and children; he even specified that bequests to his daughters would not be subject to their husbands' control. His will established a matriarchal organization to the Woodstock estate that probably reflected the strong personalities of his daughters, as well as the reality that none of his children except for Laura had reached twenty-five, then considered the age of adulthood.<sup>6</sup>

In his will, Frederick Billings included a clause that outlined his specific wishes for the Woodstock home at the time it would be divided upon the death of Julia. While this clause was intended to ensure perpetuation of his vision in the more complex situation of a divided estate, Frederick Billings probably intended the clause as a guide for management of the estate during the Julia's lifetime as well. The provisions in this clause outlined the need at Woodstock for continued and progressive improvements by the "additional purchase of land, by new roads, new plantations of trees and new buildings, if they should be needed or will add to its attractiveness." Billings specified that the portion of the property extending west from Elm Street to Mount Tom encompassing the Mansion grounds not be sold. He also called for the purchase of land along Pogue Hole Brook, as well as other land "on the skirt of Mt. Tom looking toward the village, so as to include all the trees there; in order to protect them."<sup>7</sup>

## THE HIGH COUNTRY-PLACE ERA

Following the wishes of Frederick Billings, the Billings family and estate trustees oversaw a program of improvements at the Mansion grounds between 1890 and 1914, paralleling similar improvements in the farm and forest. Reflecting both national trends in landscape design and personal interests, the Billings women updated the Mansion grounds with gardens that paralleled America's

renewed interest both in neoclassical design as well as in vernacular design characteristic of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Although many across the country were building ever bigger and more elaborate country places, the Billings women sought only to incorporate updated features, rather than to undertake wholesale reconstruction of their Victorian landscape.

The degree to which the Billings women-particularly the daughters Laura and Elizabeth-took to updating the Mansion grounds following their father's death reflected not only their interest in nature and landscape, but also the expanding role of women in the related areas of civic beautification, garden design, and the burgeoning profession of landscape architecture. Following the Civil War, gardening became a socially acceptable activity for women of wealthy families, and an especially useful one for those who summered at country places. This same period witnessed the publication of many books on gardening, most of which were written by women. By the early twentieth century, women's garden clubs and societies were being founded, giving women a public voice in civic horticulture and beautification efforts. This horticultural experience also provided women opportunities in landscape architecture, which developed into a formal profession between the Civil War and the early twentieth century. One woman, Beatrix Farrand, was one of eleven founding members of the American Society of Landscape Architects, established in 1899. Other women landscape architects practicing around the turn of the century included Martha Brookes (née Brown) Hutcheson and Ellen Biddle Shipman, both of whom would work for the Billings women at the Mansion grounds.<sup>8</sup>

There were ample opportunities for women in designing gardens at country places during the quarter century between the deaths of Frederick and Julia Billings. These years coincided with a period of unprecedented growth in wealth and prosperity, the height of the so-called Gilded Age or American Renaissance that reflected the United States' rise to a world industrial, commercial, and military power. This same period witnessed the greatest proliferation of country-place building the nation had yet seen, a phenomenon



Figure 4.2: Court of Honor at the World's Columbian Exposition. C. D. Arnold and H. D. Higginbotham, *Official Views of the World's Columbian Exposition* (Chicago: World's Columbian Exposition Company, 1893).

that brought new focus and a more academic approach to architecture and landscape architecture as Americans sought to display their wealth and culture.<sup>9</sup> While there were certain trends that characterize this era in American landscape architecture, gardening overall was stylistically diverse. The English gardener and author Gertrude Jekyll, whose writings were equally popular in the United States, summed up the diversity of the period in her introduction to her 1899 book, *Wood & Garden*, a passage she could well have written with the Billings women in mind:

*Some find their greatest pleasure in collecting as large a number as possible of all sorts of plants from all sources, others in collecting them themselves in their foreign homes, others in making rock-gardens, or ferneries, or peat-gardens, or bog-gardens, or gardens for conifers or for flowering shrubs . . . Others may best like wide lawns with large trees, or wild gardening, or a quite formal garden, with trim hedge and walk, and terrace, and brilliant parterre, or a combination of several ways of gardening. And all are*

*right and reasonable and enjoyable to their owners, and in some way or degree helpful to others.*<sup>10</sup>

While there was a great diversity in landscape design during the high Country-Place Era, the period was dominated by the rediscovery of neo-classical design. This rediscovery was popularized in the United States in large part through the World's Columbian Exposition, which took place in Chicago in 1893 and 1894. Known as the "White City," the center of the exposition was the Court of Honor, a monumental plaza which

was lined by white, Renaissance-style buildings designed by the country's foremost architects in the tradition of the École de Beaux-Arts in Paris. [Figure 4.2] The Exposition gave rise to a major shift in the country's popular architectural taste through its enormous visitation (the Billings family attended), and its extensive coverage in the popular press. The impact of the exposition became quickly evident in the country's architecture as the taste for the historicism of the Brown Decades derived from dark, medieval styles was quickly replaced during the latter 1890s with the characteristic symmetry, formality, white surfaces, and classical details of several related styles generally identified as Neoclassical Revival, Renaissance Revival, or Beaux-Arts Classicism.

The impact of the World's Columbian Exposition was not only limited to architecture: landscape architecture, both from large-scale city planning down to country-place garden design, witnessed a transformation of parallel significance. The exposition helped spur a shift away from the informal Natural style and overlay of carpet bedding and other ornament that had characterized the landscapes of country places since the Civil War. Instead of winding paths, stylized flower beds, rustic adornments, and naturalistic groupings of trees adjoining the house of a country place, the years after the World's Columbian Exposition witnessed a sudden popularity of formal Italian gardens



Figure 4.3: Hedge Walk, Quirinal Gardens, by Charles A. Platt. Reproduced as the frontispiece of Platt's monograph, *Italian Gardens* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1894).

characterized by geometry, symmetry, axes, and neoclassical-style buildings and ornament. Basically forming outdoor rooms, these neoclassical gardens typically displayed the following characteristics: (1) definite proportions of 7 or 8 to 5; (2) change in grade formed by geometric terraces; (3) structure along a major axis; (4) a minor cross axis; (5) visual reinforcement of the axes through paving, walls, and plantings; and (6) a terminus to each axis, either through a piece of art, specimen planting, built feature, or a distant view.<sup>11</sup> Despite the popularity of neoclassicism, the older Natural style remained a favored design for informal landscapes situated away from the house, reflecting the continued interest in creating an idealized rural setting.

One of the designers most influential in the growing popularity for neoclassicism in the landscape was the artist, architect, and landscape architect Charles A. Platt (1861-1933),

who settled in the Cornish, New Hampshire art colony near Woodstock in the late 1880s. His popular 1894 work, *Italian Gardens*, which documented sixteenth- and seventeenth-century gardens of the Renaissance, was the first monograph of the subject in English, and it became a watershed in the theory and design of American gardens, spurring interest in neoclassical landscape design.<sup>12</sup> [Figure 4.3]

Following the World's Columbian Exposition, country places with earlier naturalistic landscapes were often updated with an overlay of neoclassical style gardens located near the house, but not necessarily connected to it nor integrated into the larger landscape.<sup>13</sup> While adding such stylish new gardens, many country-place owners also undertook extensive renovations to their Victorian houses. The architecture of the Brown Decades had fallen very much out of favor by the turn of the century, as indicated by the country-place magazine, *House and Garden*, which published in 1906 that Victorian architecture such as the Queen Anne' style "smothered us under its meaningless complications and intricate excrescences, the tower swearing at the gable, the gable at the oriel, the oriel at the balcony, with no place for the eye to rest, nervous, restless, irrational . . ." <sup>14</sup> A few country-place owners resisted updating their Victorian architecture once they added neoclassical gardens; among them, the Billings family.<sup>15</sup>

During the 1890-1914 period, another important influence in garden and landscape design was the Arts and Crafts Movement, which originated in Britain during the mid nineteenth century as a reaction to industrialization, mass production, and the removal of the worker from the products of labor. Led by John Ruskin and William Morris, the movement sought a return to pre-industrial conditions in the arts and crafts. By the 1880s and 1890s, the Arts and Crafts Movement began to emerge as a recognizable style, although historically it was never identified as such. While neoclassicism focused on the high art of the Renaissance, the Arts and Crafts movement looked to the vernacular traditions of the village and rural countryside, where pre-industrial craft methods and natural materials predominated, in direct opposition to the ostentation and manufactured appeal of Victorian design.





Figure 4.4: Arts and Crafts garden design. Gertrude Jekyll, *Colour Schemes for the Flower Garden* (London: Country Life Ltd., 3rd ed., 1914), 88.

In the garden, the Arts and Crafts Movement was characterized by an overarching idea of harmony between culture and nature, favoring an informal naturalism (as opposed to the earlier idealized naturalism of the Natural style) that built on some of the design ideals of the earlier Aesthetic Movement as well as so-called old fashioned gardens, which looked to the nation's colonial and pre-industrial period for inspiration. Naturalized asymmetrical plantings, respect for natural site conditions, and use of native plant and vernacular building materials became the hallmarks of gardens designed according to Arts and Crafts principles.<sup>16</sup> Gertrude Jekyll, the foremost Arts and Crafts garden designer in England, became equally well known in the United States through her numerous articles and books illustrating cottage gardens and her work with color and naturalized plantings in the perennial flower border. [Figure 4.4] Elizabeth Billings owned a copy of Jekyll's *Wood & Garden*.

While the individual aesthetics of neoclassicism and the Arts and Crafts Movement may seem at odds, the two formed the basis for successful integration between

architecture and nature at American country places during this period. Neoclassicism provided the formal structure that designers sought to extend a house into the landscape, while Arts and Crafts elements such as rustic hand-laid stone walls and mixed perennial borders provided an integration with the surrounding natural landscape. *House and Garden* reflected the sensibility of the two aesthetics in its 1906 publication, *American Country Homes*:

*In country work Nature should be of the first consideration . . . Architecture should meet Nature at least half way, the two must go hand in hand and be fused into one harmonious picture. The flux is the Garden. It must be the connecting link between the house and the surrounding landscape and must be studied with relation to both, so as to form a gradual transition from the fixed and formal lines of the one to the free and irregular lines of the other.<sup>17</sup>*

Not all country-place gardens, however, made use of formal neoclassical structure, but rather looked toward a more naturalistic trend in Arts and Crafts design known as wild gardening, especially in outer garden areas. Gertrude Jekyll's woodland gardens, as published in her 1899 work, *Wood and Garden*, reflected this more wild side. These gardens, which Jekyll saw as important extensions of the more formal gardens located near the house, were characterized by rustic grass paths and roads lined by woodland flowers and native woods.<sup>18</sup> [Figure 4.5]

As Frederick Billings's forest plantations on the hill behind the Mansion matured, his daughter Elizabeth found them an ideal spot for wild gardening, which had its origins in the mid-nineteenth-century interest in newfound exotics.



Figure 4.5: "Trillium in the Wild Garden." Gertrude Jekyll, *Wood and Garden* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1899), 61.

One early trend in wild gardening, beginning in Britain in the late 1840s and 1850s, was the creation of “ferneries” (gardens devoted to ferns), often established in an outdoor glen or rockery.<sup>19</sup> The Englishman William Robinson’s 1870 book, *The Wild Garden*, spurred a broader interest in wild gardening.<sup>20</sup> In this book, which also became popular in the United States, Robinson advocated for the artistry found in wild nature, such as in an alpine or Mexican desert landscape, in opposition to the predominant scientific and formal artistry of Victorian landscapes epitomized by carpet-bedding.<sup>21</sup> In the United States, interest in displaying and studying the exotic diversity of nature led to the establishment of public botanical gardens by the 1890s, including Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University, founded in the 1880s, the New York Botanical Garden,

founded in 1894, and Brooklyn Botanic Garden, founded in 1910. These gardens were designed to advance exotic botanical knowledge and understanding of the natural world, but they also helped to foster appreciation of native landscapes and landscape design.<sup>22</sup> Charles Sprague Sargent, the founding director of the Arnold Arboretum, made a direct connection between such botanical study and landscape design in the journal *Garden and Forest / A Journal of Horticulture, Landscape Art, and Forestry*, which he founded in 1888, marking the first time that these interests came together in one American publication. *Garden and Forest* represented the diverse range of interests in native and designed landscapes by the end of the nineteenth century, publishing, for example, columns on water gardens and wild gardens and the types of plants with their appropriate culture. Elizabeth Billings, who had a subscription during the 1890s, developed her wild gardens on the hill behind the Mansion with the same broad range of interests; there she established features such as a fernery and arboretum, and water, mushroom, and grass gardens.<sup>23</sup>

#### COUNTRY-PLACE IDEALS: WOODSTOCK AND CORNISH

Aside from national design trends, personal family interests, and estate management, the Mansion grounds improvements between 1890 and 1914 also reflected Woodstock’s growing country-place society and the Billings family’s social connections with the arts colony of nearby Cornish, New Hampshire.

By the early 1890s, Frederick Billings’s hope—expressed as early as 1864—that Vermont, and Woodstock in particular, would become a favorite location for country places was becoming reality. Although Woodstock remained an important social and commercial center for the surrounding farming region, a visitor in 1891 observed that Woodstock was “a village of homes, and inhabited largely by retired business men, or other people who have ample means to live upon.”<sup>24</sup> A major event in Woodstock’s development as a leisure community occurred in 1890, when a group of the town’s leading citizens decided to replace the

old Eagle Hotel on the village green with a modern, spacious, fifty-thousand-dollar inn, which they hoped would make the village a year-round resort destination. Opened in May of 1892, the rambling four-story building—renamed the Woodstock Inn—was designed in the Shingle Style, a style popular in resort areas such as Newport, Rhode Island. [Figure 4.6] Four years later in 1896, the Woodstock Country Club opened near the inn, the first public golf course in Woodstock, and a fashionable clubhouse was added there in 1899.<sup>25</sup> Along with the inn, the country club became a center of country-place social life in the village, and its planned expansion in 1905 was seen as an indicator of the village's continued leisure development. From the local journal, *Spirit of the Age*:

*The result [of the expansion] will be to give impetus to the real estate values of Woodstock, to increase its general attractiveness, and to furnish to the Town a Country Club not excelled in its appointments anywhere outside the suburbs of the great cities . . . The salutary habit which is growing in Woodstock of purchasing small suburban sites for cottage or amateur or real farming will be helped by the Club's proposed action, which on the whole, seems to promise a distinct advance in the material and social growth of our historic town.*<sup>26</sup>

Despite the growing number of country places in Woodstock around the turn of the century, most remained modest in comparison with the Billings Estate, and the village never attracted the size or number of estates typical of Newport or Long Island's Gold Coast. Indeed, the height of the era witnessed the development of only a very few grand country places in Vermont. Foremost among these was the Webb estate, Shelburne Farms, near Burlington. Financed by Mrs. Webb's Vanderbilt family



Figure 4.6: The Woodstock Inn, view from the Green, c.1894. Woodstock Historical Society.

fortune, the estate was developed between 1886 and 1901 and at its height spread over four thousand acres along Lake Champlain with a farm, experimental forest, and baronial house and gardens. It exhibited many parallels with the Billings Estate; however, the scale and extent of Shelburne Farms was the exception among Vermont country places. More modest were country places such as Hildene, the Robert Todd Lincoln (son of Abraham Lincoln) estate in Manchester, and The Orchards, the Everett estate in Bennington. Hildene was developed during the first decade of the twentieth century on four hundred acres and featured a grand Georgian Revival mansion. The Orchards was built beginning in 1910 on seven hundred acres, complete with extensive orchards and a house in the English-Norman style. All these country places featured extensive formal gardens in fashionable neoclassical styles.<sup>27</sup> The majority of Vermont country places of the period, however, were even more modest. Farm and village-scale country places—exemplified by those developed in Woodstock's rural Sunny Side district and within the village on Mountain Avenue, were probably more typical.<sup>28</sup>

The growing number of country places around the turn of the century changed the social dynamic in Woodstock.

While the Billings had always had close family, social, and business connections in the village, many of whom were well educated and wealthy, the growth of the local summer society brought an influx of rich industrialists from major cities such as Chicago and Philadelphia who were probably on a social par with the Billings family.<sup>29</sup> Such society may have given the Billings women added impetus to improve the Mansion grounds to keep up with the newer country places. The opening of the new Woodstock Inn in 1892 and the golf course in 1896, for example, occurred around the same time that the Billings women were developing stylish new gardens on the Mansion grounds.

Another nearby community, however, also influenced the Billings family's improvement of the Mansion grounds. This community was the Cornish arts colony, located about twenty miles east of Woodstock on the New Hampshire side of the Connecticut River. The colony had its beginnings when the great sculptor of the American Renaissance, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, took up residence there in 1885. In its heyday between 1900 and 1917, the colony boasted a concentration of almost seventy prominent artists and writers, such as painter Maxfield Parish; sculptor Daniel Chester French; artist, architect, and landscape architect Charles A. Platt; and landscape architect Ellen Biddle Shipman. The Billings family's connection with the Cornish colony was apparently through the Platt family, whom Laura called on as early as September 1891 and returned to visit many times through the decade. The Platts also came on occasion to visit the Billingses in Woodstock.<sup>30</sup> In the summer of 1904, Laura and her husband, Frederick, rented a house in Cornish for the season.

For the Billings daughters, who must have learned to appreciate landscape beauty from their father, Cornish would prove an especially important place. This rural arts colony, with its old-fashioned early-nineteenth-century farmhouses and spectacular views west across the Connecticut River Valley to the mountains of Vermont, had a vibrant gardening tradition that became well known



Figure 4.7: The Cornish garden of Herbert Croly. Frances Duncan, "The Gardens of Cornish," *Century Magazine* (May 1906), 16.

across the country by the turn of the century. The *Century Magazine* of 1906, for example, praised Cornish gardens for balancing architecture and landscape, and for taking advantage of the area's natural beauty with its mountain views, such as exhibited by the Herbert Croly garden.<sup>31</sup> [Figure 4.7] Although the Cornish gardens all differed, they shared a characteristic harmony between formalism and naturalism, portending the future popularity of neoclassical and Arts and Crafts-inspired garden design. On an underlying structure of axial paths, focal points, and architectural elements, Cornish gardens typically featured a profusion of old-fashioned naturalized plantings, with beds full of informal plants such as climbing roses, peonies, hollyhocks, and sweet william.<sup>32</sup>

For Charles Platt, who first came to the colony in 1889, the Cornish landscape and gardens provided the inspiration for his earliest landscape work. The view of Mount Ascutney was reminiscent of the Italian countryside, and

Cornish provided Platt an opportunity to experiment with integrating the Italian garden design he had studied—and published in his 1894 monograph—with American landscape and vernacular gardening traditions.<sup>33</sup> Ellen Biddle Shipman, a landscape architect who first came to Cornish in 1894, trained under Platt and was equally affected by the Cornish gardens, which represented for her “the renaissance of gardening in America, the first effort in this country to return to early traditional gardening.”<sup>34</sup> Both Platt and Shipman produced designs for the Billings’s that reflected these garden characteristics.

### THE BILLINGS FAMILY AND THE WOODSTOCK ESTATE, 1890-1914

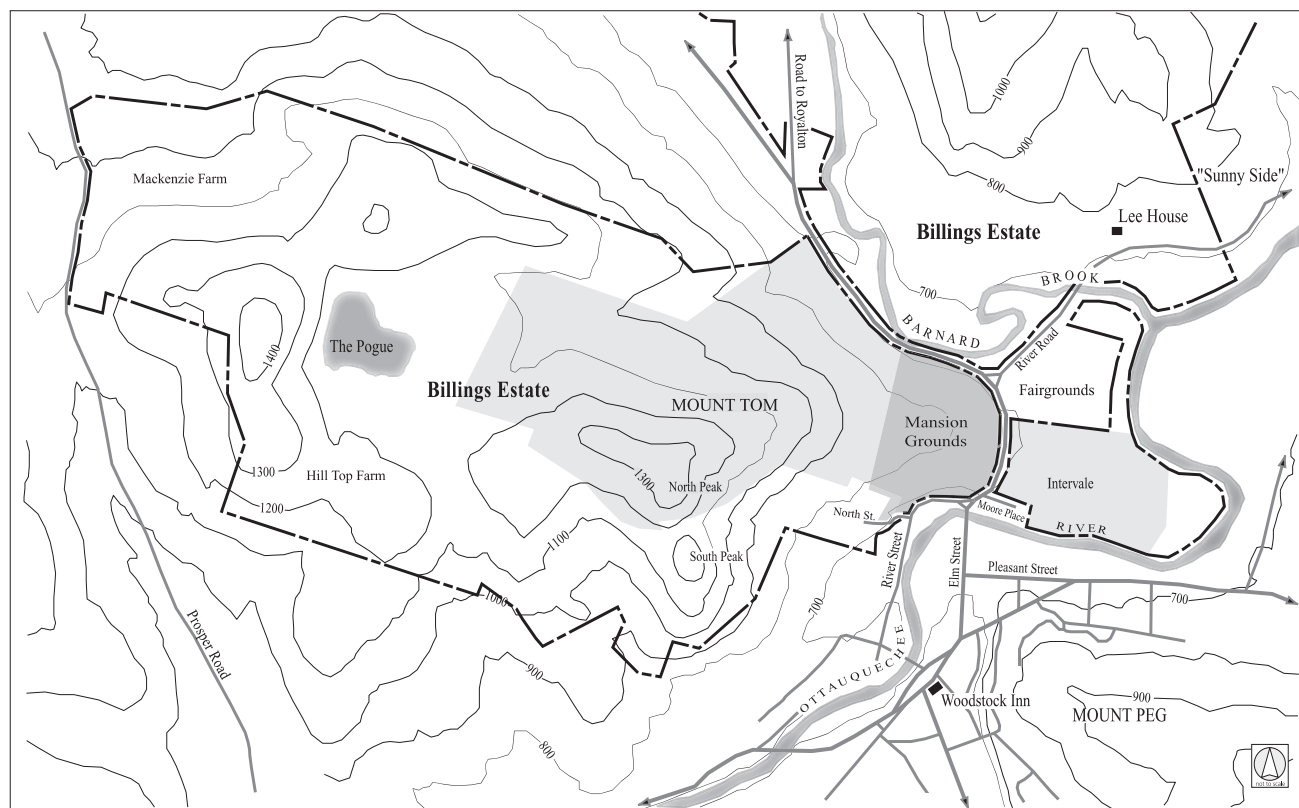
In the years following Frederick’s death in the fall of 1890, the family dynamic that had developed over the previous decade remained much the same because the children stayed single. In 1898, however, came the first wedding: Richard, at twenty-three the youngest Billings child, married May Merrill, a Wellesley College graduate and ardent suffragette; the couple had one child, Pauline. Three years later, on June 6, 1901, thirty-seven-year-old Laura married Frederic Schiller Lee. The Lees had two children: Julia (later McDill), born in 1904; and Frederick Billings Lee, born in 1906. Six years after Laura’s marriage, Mary Montagu, then aged thirty-eight, married John French on June 1, 1907. The Frenches had three children: John (Jr.) in 1909, Mary (later Rockefeller) in 1910, and Elizabeth (‘Liz,’ later Hitchcock), born in 1912. Frederick (‘Fritz’), the third oldest of the Billings children, married Jessie Starr Nichols in 1912 at the age of forty-six. Their marriage was short lived and produced no children. In 1913 after one year of marriage, Fritz died, the third son that Julia Billings outlived.<sup>35</sup> Elizabeth, the only other surviving Billings child, did not marry. She became a beloved aunt to her nieces and nephews, known affectionately as “D.A.” (Dear Aunt). No one in the third generation would carry the family name. [Billings family tree, Appendix B]

Upon their marriage in 1901, Laura and Frederic Lee established a winter home in Greenwich, Connecticut, a

fashionable suburb of New York City. In 1906, the Lees built their own country place in Woodstock on River Road in the Sunny Side district, just a short distance from the Mansion grounds. [Figure 4.8] Charles A. Platt, with whom Laura had earlier worked on the improvement of the Mansion grounds, designed the house and gardens. Following their marriage in 1907, Mary Montagu and John French also established a winter home in suburban Greenwich. The Frenches, however, continued to occupy the Mansion during the summers along with Julia Billings. Elizabeth shared both the New York City and Woodstock homes with her mother. At the time of Julia Billings’s death in 1914 at age seventy-nine, Elizabeth and Mary Montagu were managing the Mansion grounds and would soon manage most of forest and farm.

During the period between 1890 and 1914, the size of the Woodstock estate was expanded by over two hundred acres—bringing the total to 1,326.47 acres at its height in 1901—following Frederick Billings’s wishes for expansion outlined in his will.<sup>36</sup> [Figure 4.8] The newly acquired parcels, the largest of which was 118 acres of the old Mackenzie farm west of the Pogue, were used for farming and reforestation, as well as for recreation. Between 1890 and 1914, extensive new forest plantations were established across the west side of Mount Tom and other areas, primarily on worn-out pastures on the Hill Top and McKenzie farms.<sup>37</sup> Following Frederick Billings’s interests, Laura Billings took forestry classes, and George Aitken developed widely respected expertise in forestry matters. In 1904, he became the vice president of the newly formed Vermont Forestry Association, and in 1908 he was appointed to the Vermont Board of Agriculture and Forestry. The estate forests were visited by such well-known figures as Gifford Pinchot, considered the father of the United States Forest Service. For its 1909 summer meeting, which was held at the Billings property, the Vermont Forestry Association reported thus:

*The Billings Estate offers perhaps the best opportunity in Vermont for an examination of the methods and results of forest planting. Trees of various species have been planted in large numbers during*



*the past thirty or forty years, giving [a] most excellent chance to study and compare the development of different kinds of trees on different soils and under different methods of treatment.*<sup>38</sup>

**Figure 4.8:** Map of the Billings Estate, c.1906, showing additional lands acquired to date. SUNY ESF, based on Cairns survey of 1901, Billings Family Archives. The property that Frederick Billings initially purchased from Charles Marsh (Junior) in 1869 is shaded in light gray, the Mansion grounds in dark gray.

Aside from reforestation, aesthetic and recreational improvements also continued on the Mount Tom lands, including completion of a carriage road around the perimeter of the Pogue and a bridle path to the north peak of Mount Tom.<sup>39</sup> The forest and mountain road network, which the Billings family continued to keep open to the community, remained a favorite place for carriage rides, horseback riding, and walks, in addition to serving the needs of forestry and farming.

The estate's farm operation gained wide renown during this period.<sup>40</sup> Much of this success has been credited to the farm manager George Aitken, who remained with the estate until his unexpected death in 1910 at age fifty-eight. Laura Billings managed the farm along with Aitken in her capacity as agent for the estate from the time of her father's death in 1890 until her marriage in 1901.<sup>41</sup> The importance

to her of the farm operation and her close working relationship with George Aitken was reflected in the office she arranged to have built on the back of Aitken's model farmhouse in the early 1890s, an office from which she managed the affairs of the entire property. Physical improvements to the farm were many, the most significant of which was construction of a new complex of barns on the north side of Barnard Brook (then known as Beaver Creek) between 1891 and 1892. The meadow on the Ottauquechee River intervale east of the Mansion grounds continued to be the focus of agricultural activity, and was planted in various crops, including hay along Elm Street across from the Mansion grounds. [Figure 4.9] Perhaps the farm's best-known product was its dairy cattle herd, which George Aitken continued to perfect from the initial stock of Jersey cattle that Frederick Billings had introduced in the 1870s. At the World's Columbian Exposition held in

Chicago in 1893-1894, Billings Farm achieved national prominence, with top honors awarded to its Jersey cattle.<sup>42</sup>

The heyday of Billings Farm lasted through the tenure of George Aitken. Following his death in 1910, his brother James Aitken was hired as farm manager. James, however, did not meet with the same success as his brother had, and by the time of Julia Billings's death in 1914, the farm was facing financial losses.



Figure 4.9: Haying on the Billings farm, view northwest toward Elm Street and the Mansion grounds, c.1913. Billings Family Archives. George Aitken's model farmhouse, where Laura had her office, is at the right. Note the large American elms lining Elm Street in front of the Mansion grounds.

### THE MANSION GROUNDS: UPDATING A VICTORIAN LANDSCAPE, 1890-1914

During the quarter century between 1890 and 1914, the Billings family implemented many improvements to the Mansion grounds as Frederick Billings had stipulated in his will, yet carefully preserved its overall character. The Mansion, Summerhouses, Belvedere, and overall organization of the landscape were retained with much of their original Victorian character, probably due to Julia's sentiments as well as financial considerations. Improvements were made mostly as discrete additions to the landscape, rather than wholesale changes.

The Billings family's attention to beautifying the landscape not only reflected national design trends, their social connections with the Cornish Art Colony, and Woodstock's growing country-place society, but was also a perpetuation of Frederick Billings's conservation ethic reflecting harmony between people and nature. The public recognized the continued importance of conservation to the Billings family, as reflected by the following account of the estate by the Vermont Forestry Association at its meeting in 1909:

*The Billings estate is one of the most beautiful in this country. Situated in one of the most charming parts of the Green Mountains, its management has shown a fidelity to nature and an adaptation of landscape effects to natural conditions not surpassed by the famous Smiley estate in California.*<sup>43</sup>

The Billings family continued to use the Mansion grounds much as they had during the last decade of Frederick's life, typically arriving in late May or June following trips to Europe and other faraway places, and staying through late October when the fall foliage had passed. The landscape of the Mansion grounds and larger forest and farm remained a focus of interest; walks on the hill through the Garden and Hothouses, receiving callers on the piazza, and taking drives up Mount Tom were typical daily activities.

It was the Billings daughters—Laura, Mary Montagu, and Elizabeth—who managed the Mansion grounds following Frederick Billings's death.<sup>44</sup> Julia, the family matriarch, was

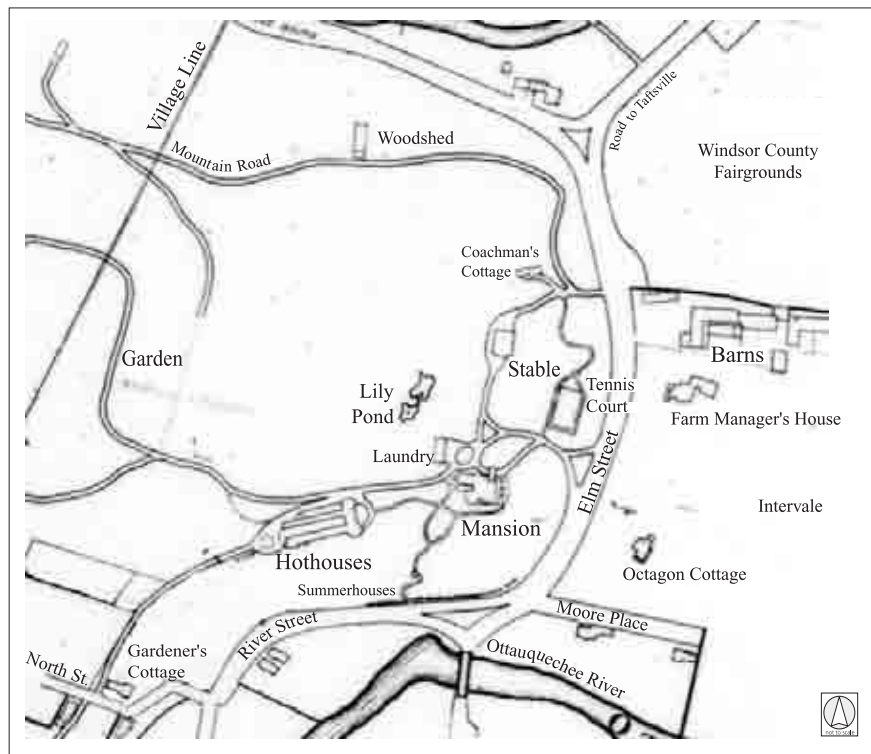


Figure 4.10: The Mansion grounds and surrounding landscape, detail of Cairns survey of 1901. Billings Family Archives, annotated by SUNY ESF.

apparently not directly involved in the upkeep of the landscape, although she certainly helped plan improvements. Like her husband, Julia loved the landscape and often reflected on its beauty to her diary, noting—for example, upon arriving one late spring—how the “forest greens showed such tender color & the air was so fine we were very glad to get the landscape in its freshness.”<sup>45</sup>

In the decade following Frederick’s death, Laura Billings had the greatest impact on the formal grounds through her capacity as manager of the estate’s Woodstock affairs along with the farm manager George Aitken and estate trustee Samuel Kilner. Laura had strong interests in landscape design, botany, and gardening, and did some work on the grounds herself, such as tree pruning.<sup>46</sup> Following her marriage in 1901 and the move to her new country place on River Road, the management seems to have been taken up equally by Mary Montagu and Elizabeth, with assistance after 1907 provided by Mary Montagu’s husband, John French.<sup>47</sup>

Elizabeth, the youngest daughter, had a very strong interest in gardening and the natural world. Along with her former governess and friend, Laura Wheeler, Elizabeth would spend many hours caring for her wild gardens in the plantations on the hillside behind the Mansion, and in what the family called “botanizing;” that is, going out into the surrounding woods to study and bring back native plants.<sup>48</sup> Mary Montagu was also interested in nature and landscape, as evidenced by her enrollment in botany courses and her assistance to Elizabeth in collecting wild plants. Yet the social and sporting life was equally important to her, especially at the tennis court where she often held “tennis teas,”

and at the new country club and the family’s own links, where she held “golf parties.” Mary Montagu also loved her dogs, rode horses, and in the summer of 1901, was the first in the family to experiment with driving an automobile. Julia’s record of activities one day in October 1905 typified the different roles of Mary Montagu and Elizabeth: “Lil [Elizabeth] was busy in the garden—Mary gave much time to the sociable” [plans for the day].<sup>49</sup>

Maintenance of the Mansion grounds, including the Mansion lawn, Garden, and Hothouses, continued to be under the daily oversight of the head gardener, who managed a workforce of between sixteen and twenty men from the spring through the fall, and about five or six during the winter.<sup>50</sup> For major planting and construction projects, the farm manager, George Aitken, usually directed the work. George Mass, the head gardener whom Frederick Billings had hired in 1875, continued in the position until November 7, 1893, when he left to pursue his own commercial greenhouse business. Laura arranged for a replacement: Robert Carruthers began work on December 1, 1893.<sup>51</sup> Carruthers was an English-born gardener who, according to George Aitken, took “great



interest in the propagation of plants, such as originating new varieties.”<sup>52</sup> His career at the Mansion grounds, however, was short-lived. Due to liquor-related problems, he left in late 1897.<sup>53</sup> After Carruthers, the family made little mention of head gardeners in their diaries, suggesting perhaps that they decided to do away with the position.

Between 1890 and 1914, the Mansion grounds consisted, as during Frederick Billings’s day, of two distinct yet connected areas: the formal grounds occupying the terrace around the Mansion, including the Hothouses; and the informal, forested landscape on the hill behind the Mansion—the location of the Garden, Lily Pond, and Woodshed. [Figure 4.10] Between 1891 and 1902, a period largely corresponding to Laura Billings tenure as manager, old-fashioned plantings were added around the Mansion, formal neoclassical flower gardens were built on Hothouse Hill, the Stable and Hothouses were rebuilt, and the entrance drive and plantings around the Mansion were redesigned. During this

same period, Elizabeth Billings developed wild and botanical gardens on the hill, including a water garden and fernery, an arboretum, and an enhancement of the Lily Pond, all of which were connected through a series of footpaths and a drive. With these new additions and alterations by the first decades of the twentieth century, the landscape of the Mansion grounds reached the height of its development.

#### **Addition of Old Fashioned Plantings**

The showy carpet beds and clipped arborvitae on the Mansion lawn added in the 1870s were the object of the Billings women’s first landscape improvements following Frederick Billings’s death. Beginning in 1891, they began to replace these stylized features with more informal, “old-fashioned” plantings. These plantings were probably

**Figure 4.11: View of the Mansion and entrance drive with addition of old-fashioned plantings, c.1895. Billings Family Archives.**





Figure 4.12: Mary Montagu Billings training vines on the southeast corner of the Mansion piazza, and Elizabeth Billings tending to an old-fashioned bed, c.1895. Billings Family Archives. Note the potted palm on the front lawn in the background and view east to the intervalle.

made under the direction of Laura Billings, who may have gotten the inspiration for them from the gardens at the nearby Cornish colony.<sup>54</sup>

In June 1891, Julia noted that flower seeds were just starting in the “new beds” around the Mansion, and during the same month, she also made remarks about lilacs, peonies, roses, and vines—old-fashioned plants that had not before surrounded the Mansion. To the earlier, Aesthetic-influenced shrub and perennial plantings along the entrance drive, the Billings women added long beds of begonias, geranium, and peonies extending along the drive leading

up to the porte cochere and along the walks around the piazza. [Figures 4.11, 4.12]. Perhaps the most noticeable change in the plantings around the Mansion was the addition of vines, including morning glories, which were trained on cords strung up and down the entire piazza. [Figure 4.12] Despite these plantings, several vestiges of the old Victorian showy formality remained, including a bed of red cannas that was maintained off the entrance drive, as well as the tropical potted plants set out on the lawn from the Hothouses.<sup>55</sup>

The Billings women also diversified the plantings around the Mansion and along the drives with flowering deciduous shrubs and ornamental trees, also reflecting a more informal, old-fashioned scheme. Receipts from the spring of 1892 and 1893 indicate a large number and variety of shrubs, ornamental trees, and vines, including false indigo, Virginia creeper, Canada barberry, dwarf Magellan barberry, Rosemary barberry, weeping white birch, Carolina allspice, yellowwood, clematis ‘Viticella,’ sweet pepperbush, weeping beech, oak-leafed hydrangea, Belgian climbing honeysuckle, mock orange, shrub roses, bridal veil spirea, and wisteria, among many others.<sup>56</sup> A visitor to the Mansion grounds in 1894 remarked upon the old-fashioned plantings on the approach to the Mansion, mentioning some of the varieties on the period receipts: “The entrance from the road is by fine wide avenues, bordered with groups of flowering shrubs of lilacs, berberis, syringa, and cut-leaved birches, passing now and then under immense spreading elms.”<sup>57</sup>

#### **Building of the Terrace Gardens and Related Improvements**

Throughout the 1890s, Laura often made the short trip to the Cornish Colony, where she visited the Platt family, among other friends. It was during these visits that she most likely became acquainted with Charles A. Platt.<sup>58</sup> Platt’s earliest architectural and landscape architectural work was for friends and Cornish neighbors, with his first known landscape commission being his 1890 neoclassical design for High Court, the Cornish summer home of Anne Lazarus. [Figure 4.13] In this plan, Platt united the formal

framework of Renaissance gardens such as he had studied and would soon publish in his 1894 work, *Italian Gardens*, with the old-fashioned planting manner of the Cornish artists, a design that would become a hallmark of his work.<sup>59</sup> Platt incorporated formal gardens as middle ground, which served in a painterly manner to draw the eye to the view of the surrounding natural landscape of the Connecticut River Valley with Mount Ascutney as a focal point in the distance. The primary garden space was a classical garden plan consisting of a square divided into four geometric borders with a central focal point (known as a quincunx plan) and planted with informal and luxuriant old-fashioned flowers such as larkspur, delphinium, and poppies, loosely contained within their formal beds. At the same time as High Court, Charles Platt was also working on a similar plan for his own country place in Cornish.

Through the 1890s, Charles Platt focused primarily on his career as a painter and etcher, for which he received medals at the 1893-1894 World's Columbian Exposition. Aside from High Court and his own home, he had only ten documented architectural and landscape architectural commissions during the 1890s. These included the Elliot house and garden in Needham, Massachusetts in 1895 (his first outside of Cornish); the Lawrence and Croly houses and gardens in Cornish in 1896; the landscape of the Sprague estate, Faulkner Farm, in Brookline, Massachusetts in 1897; the house and garden of his brother Jack in Montclair, New Jersey, designed c.1897; and the Upham residence in Dublin, New Hampshire, designed in 1899.<sup>60</sup>

During her visits to Cornish, Laura Billings had surely become familiar with Charles Platt's landscape work at High Court, as well as the neoclassical work of his artist neighbors, including sculptor Saint-Gaudens, that marked the beginnings of the American Renaissance and the end of dark Victorian design.<sup>61</sup> By 1893, the Billings family

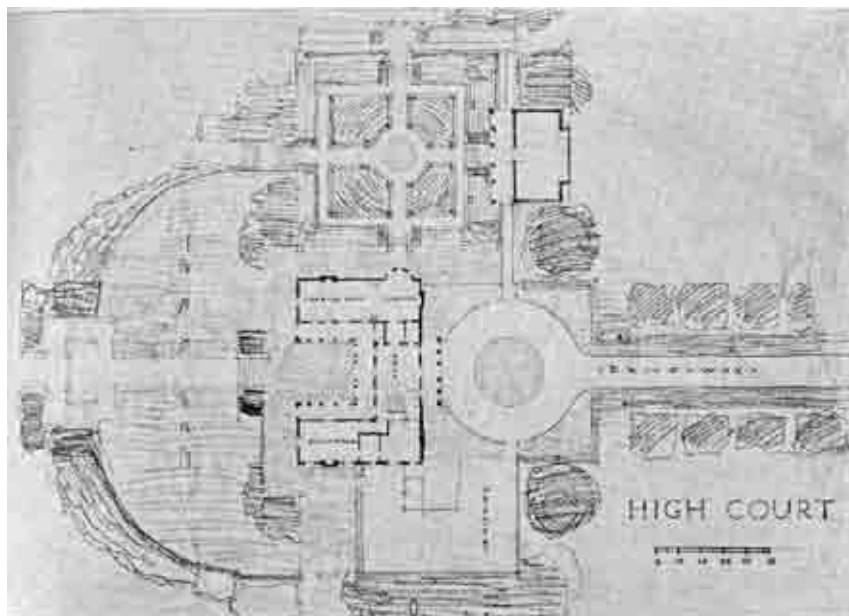
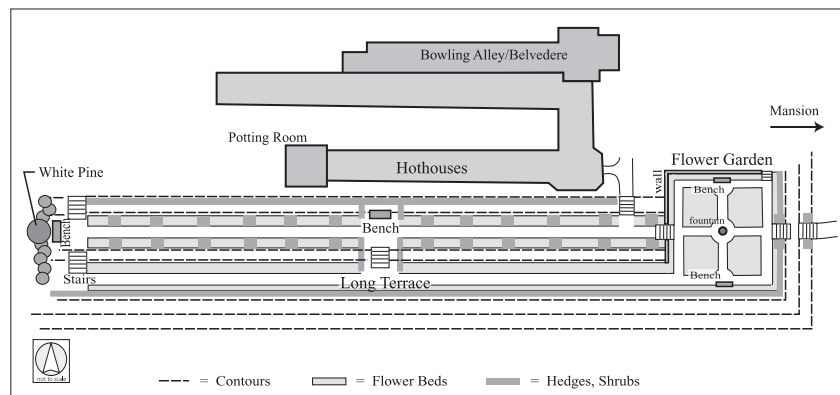


Figure 4.13: Charles A. Platt's design for High Court, Cornish, New Hampshire, 1890. *House & Garden*, vol. II, no. 9 (August 1902). Note the quincunx garden at the top of the plan, a feature similar to what Platt would design at the Mansion grounds.

would have seen firsthand that these changes in American design were not limited to Cornish and other small art circles. In July 1893, Julia, Mary Montagu, and Fritz went for a week to Chicago to visit the World's Columbian Exposition, the great White City that gave impetus to the American Renaissance; Laura followed later with George Aitken to coordinate the Billings Farm's entry of its medal-winning Jersey cattle. The family would have recognized the architecture and plan of the White City from their European travels to Renaissance cities, and gardens in Spain, Italy, and elsewhere.<sup>62</sup>

By the fall of 1894, one year after visiting the World's Columbian Exposition and during the year in which Charles A. Platt published *Italian Gardens*, Laura Billings was finalizing plans for her family's own neoclassical garden in the Cornish manner, which they would call the Terraces or Terrace Gardens. Sited on the sloping land Frederick Billings knew as Hothouse Hill, plans for the gardens included a sixty-foot square quincunx garden set on a stepped terrace (later called the Flower Garden), from which two, four-hundred foot walks (the Long Terrace)



**Figure 4.14: Diagram plan of the Terrace Gardens, begun in 1894.** SUNY ESF. Thick gray lines indicates hedges and shrubs; light gray areas, flower beds; and dashed lines, contours.

extended on axis with the vista of Mount Tom to the west. [Figure 4.14] Focal points within the gardens were provided by neoclassical furniture, including a central fountain in the Flower Garden and benches terminating the main and cross axes on the Long Terrace. Both gardens were enclosed by perimeter hedges. Within this neoclassical plan, there were Arts and Crafts-inspired features such as dry-laid stone retaining walls and old-fashioned herbaceous plantings. While Laura led the family's oversight of the planning and construction, surviving documentation indicates that the garden was designed by Charles A. Platt, making it one of his earliest landscape projects, begun just four years after High Court.<sup>63</sup> On October 26, 1894, days before Laura Billings decided on some of the final elements of the plan for the Flower Garden—the paths and the size of the fountain—she had been in Cornish, probably discussing the garden plan with Charles Platt. Platt apparently drafted a four-foot scale plan for the Flower Garden section.<sup>64</sup>

Charles A. Platt's work for the Billings fit his early pattern of designing only for family, friends, and Cornish-area neighbors, prior to his first professional landscape commission in 1895, the Elliot residence. The design Platt produced for the Billings was also visually related to his other early landscape work, especially the quincunx-plan garden on stepped terraces with mountain vistas that he incorporated in both his own place and High Court. Platt may have derived the design of the Long Terrace from the Hedge Walk in the Quirinal Gardens in Rome, which he photographed

and painted on his visit there in 1892 and used as the frontispiece of *Italian Gardens*. He incorporated a similar long terrace in his 1897-1898 design for the Sprague estate, Faulkner Farm, where he also made use of antique Italian fountains and statues to ornament the garden.<sup>65</sup> The use of informal, old-fashioned plantings was also characteristic of Platt's work during this period.

At the time Laura was deciding on the paths and size of the fountain in October 1894, construction of the Flower Garden had already begun with grading of the stepped terraces; construction of the Long Terrace would be phased in two years later. Through the winter of 1895, stone cutters were hired to build the stone steps, which were made from "Oregon stone," a bluish, fine-grained stone. By December 1894, three men were cutting stone in the Garden Shed on the hill.<sup>66</sup> At this same time, George Aitken was ordering tile to edge the flowerbeds. On February 11, 1895, he submitted the plan for the Flower Garden to the Parmenter Manufacturing Company requesting 725 linear feet of tile that would show a six-inch face and be colored to match the Oregon stone. Parmenter promised to ship the tile by April 1, by which time Aitken was hoping to have the garden ready for planting, complete with its fountain. In early March of 1895, he hired some new help to assist in completing the construction.<sup>67</sup>

April 1 came, but work on the Flower Garden was not completed as George Aitken had hoped. At the time, he was in the process of ordering hemlock for the garden's perimeter hedges on the east and south sides. For the hedges to enclose the flower beds, Aitken chose the dwarf variety of hemlock, *Tsuga canadensis* var. *Bostoniensis*, which he noted could be kept down to the desired two-foot height. A heavy spring rain threatened to wash away the sloping edges of the Flower Garden terrace, but to Aitken's surprise, they held up well. Aside from young turf, there were no plantings; work on the stone walls and steps around the garden was still not completed, and only about half of the steps had been set. Soon, the tile border arrived and was set,



Figure 4.15: The new Flower Garden during its first season, 1895. Billings Family Archives. The view is west toward Mount Tom, with the large white pine at the end of the future Long Terrace in the background; the Octagon is at the right.

the gravel paths laid out, and the perimeter hedge planted, and enough of the garden was complete to attract the attention of the local press, *Spirit of the Age*, on April 27:

*Below the conservatory, and between that and the summer houses, the slope has been partially filled in and turfed and a garden laid out, work upon which is now in progress. The ground is about 60 feet square, cut by walks and on two sides are stone walls built against the embankment. In the centre of the garden a fountain will be placed. Below the garden, separated by a few feet, are two terraces, flights of steps of "Oregon" stone leading to each, stone steps also leading into the garden from the upper side. Plants and shrubbery from the conservatory will beautify the spot, and upon the enclosing walls rose-vines will be trained. All this will be a charming addition to "The Hill" grounds.<sup>68</sup>*

Although the stone retaining walls had not been completed and the fountain had not been shipped as hoped, the

garden was planted for the family's seasonal arrival with a wide range of old-fashioned flowering plants, such as pinks, larkspur, hollyhocks, iris, peonies, phlox, gas plant, and roses along the walls. The center of the Flower Garden, where the fountain was intended, was planted with nasturtium, and planters of hydrangea were set at the top of the steps leading to the Octagon. In contrast with these old-fashioned plantings, large potted palms that had in previous years been set out on the lawn were placed around the center of the garden and the approach from

the Mansion. [Figure 4.15] The bank below the Octagon was planted with shrubs, perhaps to screen the Victorian Hothouses.

Following the family's return to New York in the fall, work resumed on the Flower Garden, but by the following 1896 season, it was still not complete. The fountain had been further delayed, and the wood framework was still on the stone retaining walls. The garden was, however, prepared again for the family's arrival. The only changes from the previous year were the addition of a low hedge along the edges of the beds (Aitken apparently substituted a privet or barberry for the dwarf Boston hemlock), and the substitution of the center bed of nasturtium with a sundial set on a granite table, adjacent to which were the exposed water pipes waiting for the fountain.<sup>69</sup> The tropical potted plants that had been set out the previous year, perhaps temporarily to make up for the young plantings, were not set out again. [Figure 4.16]

With much of the work on the Flower Garden done by the fall of 1896, planning began for construction of the second phase of the garden, the Long Terrace. While it was conceptualized as part of the initial garden design, the details of the Long Terrace were apparently only worked out by 1897. As with the Flower Garden, Charles A. Platt was responsible for the detailed design, which consisted of two walks



**Figure 4.16:** Mary Montagu with her dogs at temporary sundial in the center, installed for the Flower Garden's second season, c.1896. Billings Family Archives.

positioned on terraces that stepped down the slope parallel with the Hothouses. The main walk extended on axis with the center of the Flower Garden to the east and a vista of Mount Tom to the west, and a lower walk extended from the south walk of the Flower Garden. [See Figure 4.14] The walks were connected by two sets of stone steps, one in the middle cross axis and one at the west end. At the end of the main walk, Platt designed a white-painted neoclassical wooden bench with volute arms, and a second bench without volutes at the top of the center cross-axis walk.<sup>70</sup> Behind the bench, the main walk was terminated by an existing grove of evergreens, including a prominent white pine on axis with the walk. In the distance behind the white pine rose the distinctive double peaks of Mount Tom.

Work on the Long Terrace began in fall 1897 with grading of the terraces, turfing the banks and building the Oregon-stone steps. George

Aitken, who continued to oversee the construction, was anxious to have the garden finished in time for the family's arrival for the 1898 season, and his staff was busy on the project through May of that year. Most of the construction was finished in time for the family's return on July 8 after their long trip to the Far East; on this date, Laura showed her mother what she called the "extended terrace."<sup>71</sup> [Figure 4.17] Along with the Long Terrace, additional work was undertaken in the Flower Garden in anticipation of the installation of the long-awaited fountain. The Parmenter tiles in the garden were apparently not satisfactory and were replaced with Oregon stone edging, the same edging that was being installed along the Long Terrace walks and beds. Along with this edging, large slabs of Oregon stone were installed in the center of the Flower Garden around the location of the proposed fountain.

On March 17, 1898, Charles Platt finally notified George Aitken that he had located an antique, white marble Italian fountain, which cost \$260.00 plus \$158.20 in duties and transportation, from which Platt received a 10 percent commission. The fountain was delivered from Italy to Platt's

**Figure 4.17:** View west along the main walk of the Long Terrace with Platt-designed benches at middle and terminus, c.1898. Billings Family Archives. Also visible is the large white pine on axis with the walk, as well as the hillside Norway spruce plantation at the right. The structures at the upper right are cold frames along the North Street drive; these were probably removed soon after the Long Terrace was completed.



New York City office where he oversaw its repair and cleaning at a cost of \$25.00. While Aitken wanted the fountain to be installed in time for the arrival of the family, the project was further delayed because the fountain's new white marble basin, which Platt designed, had to be fabricated. In May 1898, Aitken contracted with the Vermont Marble Company of Rutland, near the marble-producing region of southwestern Vermont, to make the basin. Due to manufacturing problems, the firm did not finish the basin until late July, apparently too late for the fountain to be installed for the season.

Charles Platt finished his work on the project by December 1898, when he submitted his final bill for \$555.52, covering the design for the pedestal and benches, and the acquisition and cleaning of the fountain.<sup>72</sup> [Figure 4.18] It was not until the following May, however, that the Italian fountain was finally installed, in time for the family's seasonal arrival. Upon the arrival of the family on June 9, 1899, George Aitken took Laura and Julia to see the fountain, and Laura subsequently showed it to visiting acquaintances.<sup>73</sup> [Figure 4.19] With the fountain, the Terrace Gardens were finally complete. By this time, the plantings and low hedges in the Flower Garden had matured, and the perimeter hemlock hedge was beginning to fill in and enclose the garden. The shrub and tree plantings that extended from the Summerhouses to the Belvedere, which Frederick Billings had planted in the 1880s, were thinned out in July 1899, opening up the view of the Flower Garden and its vista of Mount Tom on the approach from the Mansion.<sup>74</sup> [Figure 4.20] Plantings on the Long Terrace followed a mix of formal beds, clipped hedges, and old-fashioned plantings similar to the Flower Garden. The main walk was lined by narrow beds consisting of cylindrically shaped arborvitae shrubs interspersed with roses, and pots of gracefully

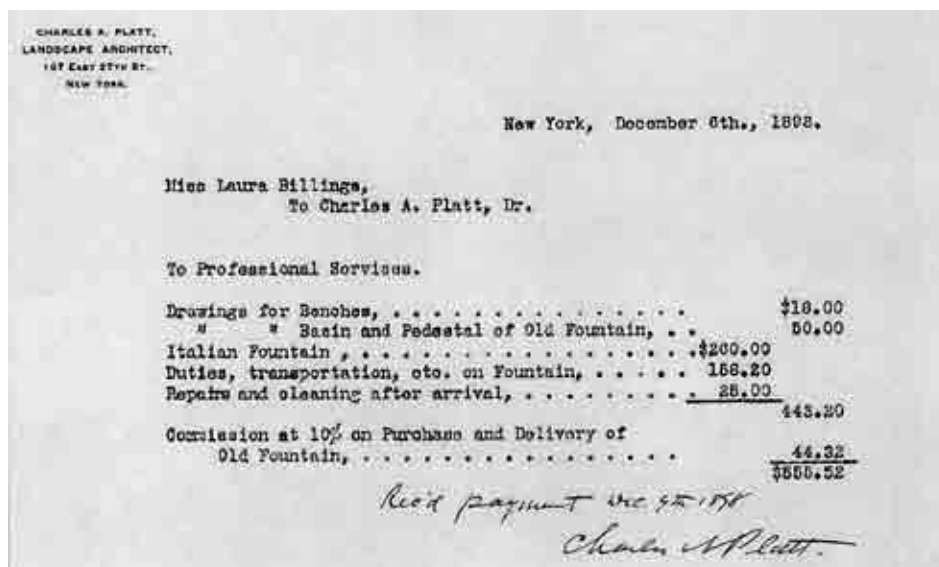


Figure 4.18: Receipt from Charles A. Platt for work on the Long Terrace benches and Flower Garden fountain, December 6, 1898. Billings Family Archives.

Figure 4.19: Laura Billings (standing, right) and two acquaintances, L. H. W. Clarke and Julia Isham Taylor, admiring the long-awaited Italian fountain, c.1899. Billings Family Archives. The view is looking east toward the Mansion.





Figure 4.20: View of the Flower Garden looking west toward Mount Tom, c.1899. Courtesy Jane McDill Smith, Woodstock, Vermont.

drooping hydrangea were placed on the bench at the end of the walk. The sundial on the granite table that had been temporarily used in the center of the Flower Garden was moved to the upper walk in front of the bench at the cross-axis steps. The lower walk was lined by a flower border that ran its full length, including a mixed perennial bed on the north side, and on the south side bordering the hemlock hedge, a bed of peonies.<sup>75</sup> [Figure 4.21]

The entire north side of the Terrace Gardens was bordered by the Hothouses, which may have seemed stylistically incongruent with their dark trim, ornate scrollwork, and other Victorian details, contrasting with the white furniture, geometry, and graceful informality of the Terrace Gardens. Under the care of the head gardener Robert Carruthers during the mid 1890s, the Hothouses were a showcase of tropical and flowering plants, fruit trees, and grapes, often attracting the attention of visitors and people in the community, who were free to visit.<sup>76</sup> Greenhouses in general remained a very desirable component of fashionable country places during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a time when manufacturers such as Lord & Burnham—the firm that originally built the Hothouses for Frederick Billings—were reaching the height of their suc-

cess and renown. They enticed country place owners to build greenhouses through advertisements in fashionable journals such as *House and Garden*. [Figure 4.22]

Perhaps more important than their style, the Hothouses were deteriorating by the late 1890s, due to exposure to over twenty years of hot, humid conditions. In 1895, some of the stone coping on the foundation walls of the Octagon had to be replaced, and in December, Mr. Carruthers called for resetting of the glass and repainting the Grapery, work that continued through the next two years. In 1897,

bricks in the foundations had to be replaced.<sup>77</sup> Deterioration in the wooden structure was also likely, as George Aitken suggested in a letter to Lord & Burnham Company in August 1898:

Figure 4.21: Flower border along the lower walk of the Long Terrace, view west with the Potting Shed, white pine, and Mount Tom in the background, c.1900. Billings Family Archives.







Figure 4.22: Lord & Burnham advertisement. *House & Garden*, vol. II, no. 11 (November 1902), iii. Lord & Burnham were to produce a similar design for the Billings's greenhouse reconstruction project.

*We are contemplating the replacing of the wood rafters to our greenhouses which you built some years since, with iron ones. Would like some estimate of the cost, also if we can arrange so as to get part at a time, that we may not be obliged to unroof thw [sic] whole at once, we would like perhaps to take the roof off in sections, please let me hear from you in the matter, your idea as to size, weight &c.*

In August 1900, one year after the Terrace Gardens had been completed, representatives from Lord & Burnham arrived in Woodstock to plan the reconstruction of the Hothouses with George Aitken and Laura Billings.<sup>78</sup> The initial plans were for the replacement of the Octagon, Tropical House, and Rosary, the greenhouses most visible from the Terrace Gardens. The Grapery, which had recently been repainted and reglazed, was not included in the initial project, nor was the newer Camellia House extension to the Rosary, built in 1882.

Lord & Burnham produced water-colored renderings of two proposed

designs for “Miss L. Billings, Woodstock Vt.”: one with rectangular eaves (Plan No. 1155A), and one with curved eaves (Plan No. 1155). [Figure 4.23] Both plans called for white-painted greenhouses with simple massing and neoclassical detailing around the main entrance porch to the new Octagon (conservatory) including a fanlight and volutes, and a rectangular rather than octagonal plan.<sup>79</sup> The structures were to be built of white-painted wrought iron with wooden glazing bars. By the turn of the century, Lord & Burnham had specialized in the production of iron-frame greenhouses, which were stronger and more durable than wooden ones, and through their thinner structural members allowed for increased light and better growing conditions.

Laura selected the curvilinear option (Plan No. 1155), and gave Lord & Burnham quick approval to proceed with the project, which began in the early fall of 1900 with the demolition of the superstructures of the Octagon, Tropical House, and Rosary. Due to unexpected problems with repair of the old foundations, the new iron and glass superstructures were not completed until the following spring of 1901.<sup>80</sup> [Figure 4.24] Once the three greenhouses were com-

Figure 4.23: Plan No. 1155, east elevation of proposed new greenhouses by Lord & Burnham, c.1900. Billings Family Archives. The rendering shows the replacement Octagon at the left, the Tropical House at the right.

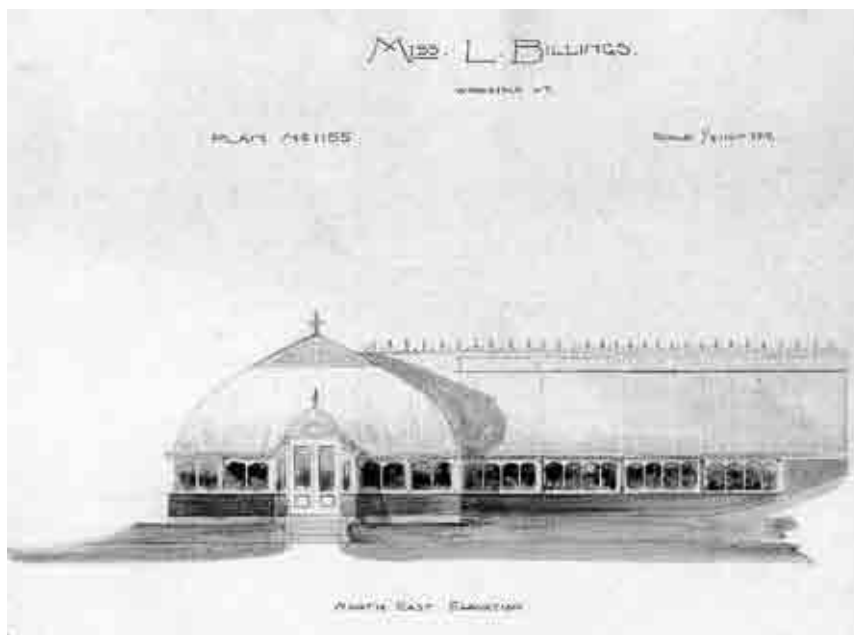




Figure 4.24: The new conservatory (Octagon), view from the Flower Garden, c.1903. Billings Family Archives.

pleted, Laura Billings and her brother Fritz decided that the remaining old greenhouses also needed to be replaced. In October 1902, the Grapery superstructure and the Potting Room and adjoining Camellia House were demolished, but only the Grapery was rebuilt. The potting area and office that were housed in the Potting Room were relocated to the Belvedere, which was retained along with the Bowling Alley, and a flower bed was established on the site of the Camellia House.<sup>81</sup> The Belvedere, although it was incongruent with the design of the neoclassical style of the Terrace Gardens, was retained in its dark earth-tone colors, perhaps due to Julia's fond sentiments for the building.<sup>82</sup>

The addition of the Terrace Gardens and replacement of the Hothouses were the most visible changes to the landscape of the Mansion grounds in the years of Laura Billings's management between 1891 and 1901; however, there were several other significant improvements. Soon after work began on the Flower Garden in 1894, planning

was also begun to replace the Stable, which had been built as part of Frederick Billings's initial improvements. By March 1895, architect Ehrick Rossiter, the nephew of Julia Billings who had assisted with design of the Potting Room back in 1882, was finalizing plans for the new, slightly larger building, which would be built partly on the foundations of the old Stable.<sup>83</sup> The Stable was surrounded along its west side by the plantation of Norway spruce that Frederick Billings had planted along the hillside during the 1870s. By the 1890s, these trees had become quite large and were highly valued; George Aitken, in reviewing the plans for construction, suggested altering the footprint of the new building to avoid impacting any of them. By the last week of March, Aitken reported to Laura Billings that demolition of the old Stable was nearly complete, and by July, that the new building had been finished.<sup>84</sup> Rossiter designed a simple, neoclassical-style frame building that complemented the style of the Terrace Gardens then under construction. The building was sided in shingles and clapboards and featured a prominent cross-hip and gable roof, dormer, and a cupola. Some details in Rossiter's design, including balustrades along the roof and multi-paned windows, were apparently not executed.

Around the same time that the new Stable was built, Laura Billings made some changes to the accessibility of the Mansion grounds, which had been open to the public for many years. In May 1894, she and Julia discussed closing the "near woods" (a term they used for the woods on the hill within the Mansion grounds) to the public on Sundays, and George Aitken already had plans set to install a gate. On May 28, Laura had prepared a public notice to be published in the local newspaper about the closing of the grounds on Sundays, by which time the gate had probably been installed at the entrance to the mountain road near the Coachman's Cottage.<sup>85</sup> An article on the grounds published in June of 1894 reported: "The estate is directly under the supervision of Miss L. Billings; the grounds and greenhouses are free to the public, and all are made welcome any day save Sunday, when you can only enter by the Hill Top Farm."<sup>86</sup> The grounds were probably closed on Sunday due to the family's need for privacy and respect for religious observance.

Later in 1894, Laura also addressed the visibility of the Mansion from Elm Street. Over the years, the perimeter plantings along the Mansion lawn had been thinned out as the Norway spruce matured, in part to maintain the views from the Mansion. In November 1894, Laura asked George Aitken to plant Norway spruce along the road in front of the Mansion, probably to fill in where plantings had been removed. Aitken suggested that the new spruce be cut back, which would make them “low and spreading so that while they will effectually [sic] shield the house from the road they will not be high enough to interfer [sic] with the view from the house.”<sup>87</sup>

### **Redesign of the Mansion Entrance and Plantings**

Following the completion of the new Stable, Terrace Gardens, and Hot-houses, the main entrance drive became the next object of improvement for the Billings women. Aside from the addition of old-fashioned plantings, there had been no other major improvements to the Mansion or its surrounding landscape since Frederick Billings’s death. A small change in the spring of 1899 was the enlargement of the verandah along the south side of the Mansion and the realignment of the adjoining paths.<sup>88</sup> There were apparently never any plans to change the house’s outdated Queen Anne style.

Plans were in the works soon after this time to further update the plantings around the Mansion and the main entrance drive that looped beneath the porte cochere, built according to the 1869 design of R. M. Copeland. The tear-drop shaped loop of the drive not only reflected an outdated design, but also its layout was awkward, especially where a tangle of drives came together in an oval in front of the Laundry. The alignment of the drive may have also been difficult for automobiles—which were just coming into use—to maneuver. Mary Montagu’s introduction of the automobile to the Mansion grounds in the summer of 1901 may have caused some upset in the use of the drives, but apparently was more of an issue on the public roads.<sup>89</sup> The following fall, the family decided to undertake a major redesign of the main entrance drive and grounds surrounding the Mansion, perhaps in part to reflect the

new use of the automobile, but probably more to provide a stylistically up-to-date approach to the Mansion, in keeping with the Terrace Gardens and other recent improvements. Mary Montagu took the lead on the project, since Laura was no longer managing affairs for the estate following her marriage in 1901. She contacted Martha Brookes Brown (1871-1959), who called herself a “Landscape Gardener” and maintained an office at 66 Chestnut Street in Boston, to redesign the approach. On September 8, 1902, Brown arrived in Woodstock accompanied by Mary Montagu; she left the following day on the train back to Boston.<sup>90</sup>

In 1902, Martha Brookes Brown was a thirty-year-old woman just beginning her career, an age and status similar to that of Mary Montagu and Elizabeth. She was in the midst of her landscape-oriented studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, which she attended between 1900 and 1903, and around the same time she also undertook a self-study program in botany and horticulture at the Bussey Institute at Harvard University.<sup>91</sup> After completing her studies, Brown continued her practice in Boston until 1912. During this decade of professional work, she designed over fifty known landscapes, primarily at country places throughout New England, New York, and New Jersey. Much in the spirit of Charles A. Platt’s work, her designs were characterized by an overriding concern for the unity of house, garden, and larger landscape, and in the integration of formal neoclassical garden structure with Arts and Crafts-inspired informal plantings. She also developed a strong interest in adapting landscapes to the indigenous environment through the use of native plants. Martha Brown was among the first women in the United States to move beyond the traditional role of women in gardening to the more comprehensive profession of landscape architecture, eventually becoming a Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects, the third woman so elected. Following her marriage and move to Manhattan in 1912, Martha Brown, by then Martha Brookes Hutcheson, closed her practice and turned to raising her family, and writing and lecturing on garden matters.<sup>92</sup>

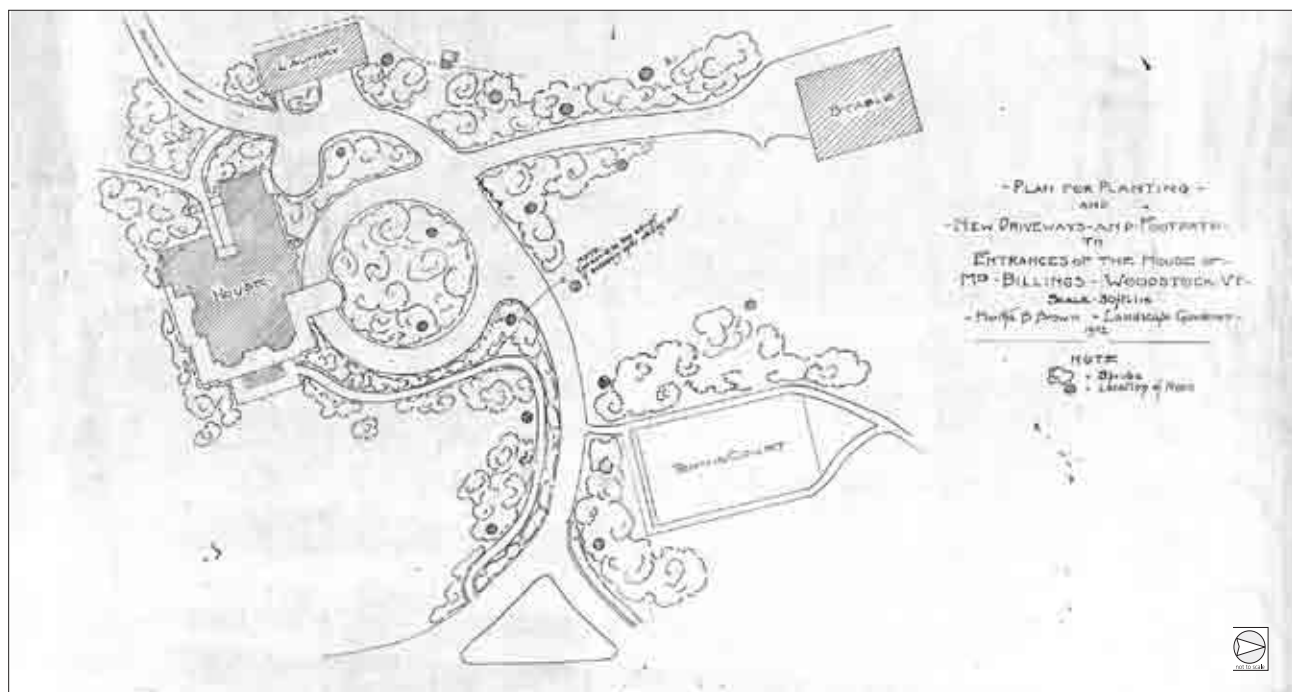
Following her September 1902 visit to the Mansion grounds, Martha Brown produced a plan for the approach to the Mansion that is one of her earliest known professional commissions. It was entitled “Plan for Planting and New Driveways and Footpath to Entrances of the House of Mrs. Billings [Julia Billings] Woodstock Vt.”<sup>93</sup> [Figure 4.25 ] Brown reconfigured both the vehicular and pedestrian approaches to the Mansion in a more rational, neoclassical manner, and called for a program of dense shrub planting along the drives and walks, and around the Mansion and Laundry. She redesigned Copeland’s tear-drop shaped loop into a circle that separated the rear service area from the entrance drive. [Figure 4.26] The circular drive was apparently a favorite design of Brown’s, because she later incorporated a similar one at her own country place, Merchiston Farm, in Gladstone, New Jersey.<sup>94</sup> Brown specified that the stone posts of the gateway be retained, but without the ornamental iron gates.

For the pedestrian entrance to the Mansion, Brown designed a path that paralleled the drive and extended to the front entrance of the Mansion, where she called for the replacement of the curvilinear steps with a rectangular staircase and landing. She also indicated that the curvilinear

paths bordering the entire verandah should be removed, as well as the old gas lamps that lined the drives and paths.

Martha Brown’s use of extensive shrub plantings along the drives and walks served to unify the area extending from the entrance at Elm Street up to and surrounding the tennis court, Stable, Mansion, and Laundry, and provided an informal, woodland-like setting to the landscape. She did not specify plant varieties on the plan, but she used a mix of native and old-fashioned shrubs. Martha Brown later wrote that hedges of natural plant materials, such as “high-bush blueberry, clethra, the various viburnums and thorns, wild roses, azaleas, barberry, and spice bush” could serve as an effective connection between various elements in a landscape. “The setting of a house, for instance can—with no false introduction of planting—be connected with an equally architectural garden or tennis court, through a stretch of natural woodland which demands some continuity of treatment.”<sup>95</sup>

Figure 4.25: Martha Brookes Brown, “Plan for Planting and New Driveways and Footpath to Entrances of the House of Mrs. Billings,” 1902. Billings Family Archives.



The Brown design for the approach to the Mansion in effect extended the existing naturalistic landscape of the hill and Summerhouses through the Mansion lawn and around the out-of-date Victorian buildings, thereby making them less prominent. While the Victorian carpet bedding and tropical potted plants had been largely removed prior to Brown's arrival, the Mansion, Laundry, Summer Houses, paths, and drives probably still gave the landscape a strongly Victorian flavor. Martha Brown disliked Victorian design; she would later write that "the mid-Victorian age [was] marked by fashions—practically dead to-day [1923]—of geranium flower-beds, red salvia and canna plantings, and palms in jardinières. The vandal who still deals in the trunks of cedars for arbor-making and garden furniture marks a last remnant of that period which we may call the Slough of Despond."<sup>96</sup>

Construction of Martha Brown's design did not begin until the fall of 1903, one year after she had drawn the plan.<sup>97</sup> In the meantime, the family was probably mulling over the design; in the end they apparently decided to implement everything except for the path and new front steps to the Mansion. George Aitken oversaw the construction in coordination with Brown, who sent him a list of the various shrubs and trees she had ordered to be planted the following spring. By April 1904, most of the plants had arrived and Aitken and his crew were busy planting. There were some errors in the plant order: too many lilacs and strawberry bush had been sent, and twelve acanthopanax (a prickly deciduous shrub) were missing. George Aitken wrote Martha Brown for instructions on what to do with the extra plants; she wrote back suggesting the plants "had better be left heeled in until I am there some time in the summer, when I will place them."<sup>98</sup>

The Brown plan, although it changed the drive and introduced many additional shrubs around the Mansion, did not significantly alter the overall character of the grounds, at least in the eyes of Julia Billings. Upon arrival for the season in June 1905, one year after the completion of the new drive and plantings, she noted in her diary: "Lilacs & hawthorne still blooming & the place as lovely as ever—the

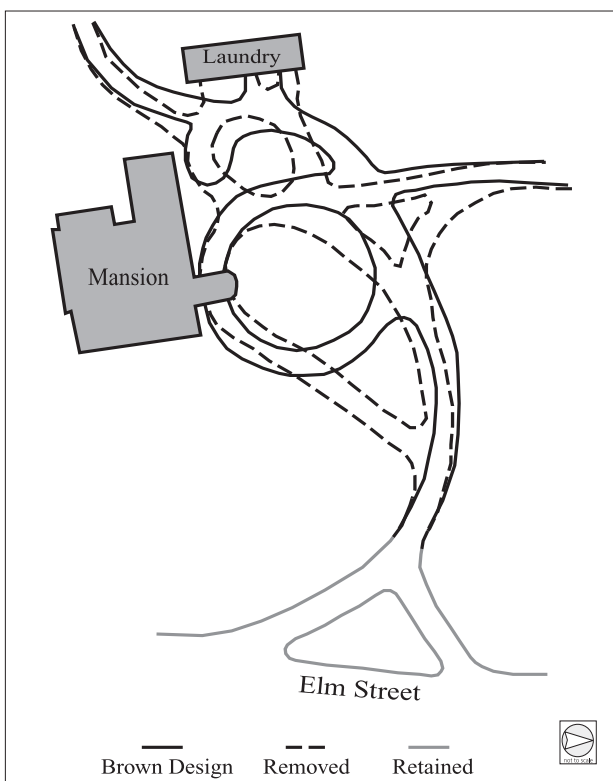


Figure 4.26: Comparison of Brown redesign of main entrance drive with pre-existing Copeland design (identified by dashed line). SUNY ESF.

house newly painted."<sup>99</sup> The Mansion, still with its original curving front steps, was repainted in its original earth tones, reflecting at least Julia's continued strong sentiments toward preserving its Victorian character.

Soon after work on the entrance drive was completed, planning began on the Elm Street perimeter bordering the Mansion lawn. It is likely that the Norway spruce that Laura Billings had directed George Aitken to plant along Elm Street in front of the Mansion in 1894 were obstructing the view; and the older trees planted by Frederick Billings were probably no longer screening views from the street as their lower limbs died off. The family decided that a continuous hedge would be needed, and in November 1904, George Aitken was looking into purchasing quantities of three-foot-high hemlock from Dundee Nursery, probably for that purpose.<sup>100</sup> By this time, hedges were becoming increasingly popular as the neoclassical style in landscape design favored enclosed spaces; a clipped hedge, as in the Terrace Gardens, would also serve to unify and contain the naturalistic plantings around the Mansion



lawn. The addition of a perimeter hedge may have been the suggestion of Martha Brown, who continued to visit the grounds and consult with the Billings through 1905. About hedges, she later wrote:

*Its most important use is found when planted in front of the houses on a village street. It gives to the street itself, as does nothing else, a style in composition; and from the owner's view within the grounds it makes the place seem larger and more important by cutting off the highway as well as providing a background.<sup>101</sup>*

Work began on planting the new hemlock hedge in the fall of 1905. On October 20th, Julia recorded: “The Spruces which screened us from the Moore house [located on the opposite side of Elm Street] were felled—the next day hemlocks were planted.”<sup>102</sup> The new hemlock hedge, which extended from the main entrance to the Summerhouses and also around the triangular island in the entrance, was

**Figure 4.27: View of the Mansion lawn with newly planted hemlock hedge above the perimeter stone wall, c.1905. Billings Family Archives. Also visible are the shrubs around the Mansion, added as part of the improvements designed by Martha Brookes Brown.**

planted above the perimeter stone wall. [Figure 4.27] The old section of hemlock hedge adjoining the main entrance was probably replanted at this time. In subsequent years, the hedge would be carefully clipped in a rectangular shape about four feet in height.

Over the course of the next decade until Julia's death in the summer of 1914, there were a few other significant changes in the landscape of the Mansion terrace. The introduction of the automobile required a new building most likely because of the threat of fire in the Stable where they may have been initially kept. In July 1908, farm staff built a garage between the Stable and Coachman's Cottage.<sup>103</sup> The one-story hipped-roof building was built in concrete, a fireproof and relatively new building material, and



Figure 4.28: View of entrance drive illustrating reset granite posts with new iron lanterns, September 12, 1913. Billings Family Archives. The drive is bordered by the perimeter hemlock hedge, planted in 1905.

designed with little ornament. It featured hipped dormers and cupola, slate roof, and a pair of large sliding doors. The drive to the Coachman's Cottage was extended west to access the garage. Another change probably related to the use of automobiles was the widening of the head of the entrance drive on Elm Street. In January 1912, the granite posts that remained from the original gateway were moved to accommodate widening of the driveway from ten to eighteen feet, and in May, the adjoining wall and hemlock hedge was reset. By June, the widened driveway was completed and the granite posts were reset. Because they no longer held up heavy iron gates, the posts were raised about three feet out of the ground, and were topped with ornamental iron lanterns. [Figure 4.28] The drive was subsequently resurfaced with fresh gravel by the farm staff.<sup>104</sup>

By 1912 when the driveway entrance was widened, the profuse shrubbery that Martha Brown had designed a decade before was growing out of bounds. In August 1912, Elizabeth Billings and John French "superintended cutting back shrubs along drive," and two days later, Elizabeth saw about "further trimming in circle." She continued working on the shrubs around the Mansion through late August. Despite all this trimming, however, Elizabeth remained dissatisfied with the shrubbery in the circle and, in October, she had it uprooted.<sup>105</sup> She probably had a Norway spruce planted in the circle at this time.

#### **New Planting Schemes for the Terrace Gardens**

Elizabeth Billings's trimming and removal of the Mansion shrubbery in 1912 reflected her active involvement in the formal grounds along with Mary Montagu and her husband John French. She had been interested in wild gardening and botany for many years, and

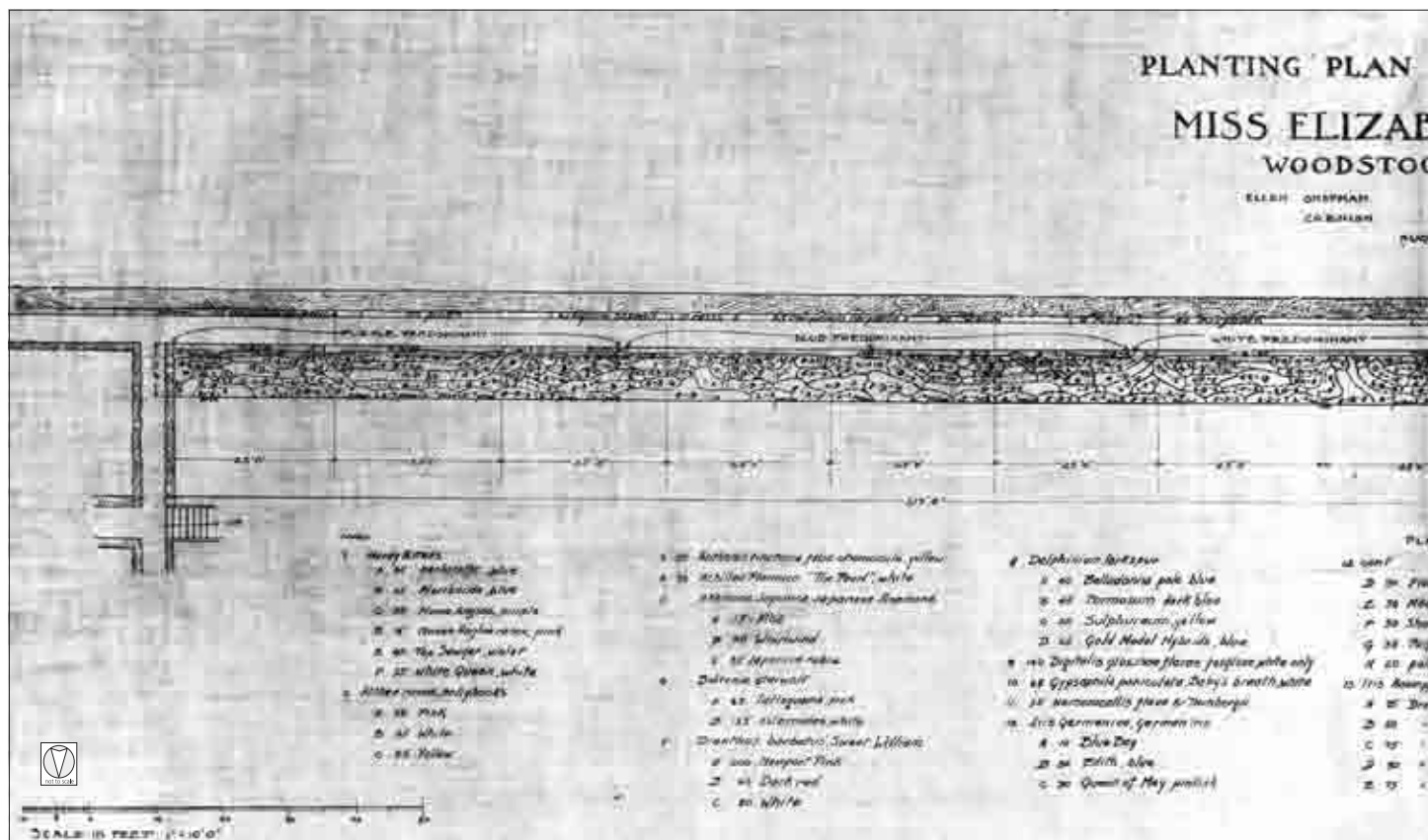
her interest in the formal landscape may have evolved out of the family's need for her horticultural knowledge; Laura had long ceased to be involved, and Mary Montagu apparently did not have much interest in gardening. Elizabeth may have taken a keen interest in the old-fashioned and native flowering plants in the Terrace Gardens, which remained a favorite place to stroll. On a walk in the gardens one early summer day in 1909, Elizabeth noted that her mother "was enthusiastic over the Daylilies, Sweetbrier, rosebuds & gas plant," old-fashioned plants that she (Elizabeth) apparently liked as well.<sup>106</sup>

Like her sister Laura, Elizabeth's interest in formal gardening may have grown due to connections with the Cornish colony, which she visited beginning in the 1890s with both Laura and Mary Montagu. During these visits, it is likely Elizabeth visited the Platt family, at which time she may have met Ellen Biddle Shipman, a Cornish resident and gardener, later a student of Charles A. Platt and

professional landscape architect.<sup>107</sup> Whether Elizabeth was sociable with Ellen Shipman during the 1890s and first decade of the 1900s is not known. In 1911, however, Elizabeth brought Shipman to Woodstock to help with the gardens of the Mansion grounds and also to plan other beautification efforts in the village. Over the course of the next few years, Elizabeth and Ellen Shipman worked together on a variety of local gardening projects. It was Elizabeth who engaged Ellen Shipman to make improvements on the grounds of the Congregational Church in 1913; two years later, Elizabeth also had Shipman design improvements to the Woodstock train station, as well as the triangular park in front of the Elm Street Bridge.<sup>108</sup>

Although Ellen Biddle Shipman (1869-1950) exhibited strong interests in gardening and architecture as a child, it was not until she and her husband, the playwright Louis Shipman, visited Cornish in the summer of 1894 that she began to cultivate those interests. The Shipmans soon moved permanently to Cornish, where Ellen kept busy raising her family, gardening, and socializing. During this

time, she dreamed of becoming a garden designer, dreams that took a turn toward reality in 1899 when Charles A. Platt discovered her talents and gave her drafting tools. Over the next decade, her husband's frequent absences left Ellen alone in Cornish with her three children and little time to devote to her professional aspirations. Around 1910, Louis left her and moved to London (they later divorced). Ellen decided she would become a professional landscape architect in order to support her family. She entered into an apprenticeship under Platt, who had achieved significant national fame by this time. By 1912 she had begun developing planting plans in her own office and, under Platt, was soon preparing construction drawings for walls, pools, and small garden buildings. The first documented collaboration between Shipman and Platt was in 1913 at Fynemere, the summer home of James Fenimore Cooper II in Cooperstown, New York.<sup>109</sup> For this and many other early projects, Platt had Shipman design the plantings, an expertise for which she became renowned. In her own practice, Shipman's earliest work during the 1910s was







the walk, and for a parallel 2-foot wide strip along the south side adjacent to the hemlock hedge. Shipman designed a complex planting plan employing fifty-seven varieties of flowering perennials arranged into six sections defined by the predominant colors of purple, blue, white, yellow, pink, and “various.” She made use of anemone, hardy asters, baby’s breath, chamomile, daylilies, delphinium, hollyhocks, foxglove, iris, lupins, phlox, starwort, sweet william, and yarrow, lined by a border of sweet alyssum. [For the complete plant list, see Appendix E.]

Along the narrow bed adjoining the hemlock hedge, Shipman called for more shade-tolerant perennials, including coral bells, foxglove, funkia, ferns, pansies, Iceland poppy, saxifrage, sedum, and campanula, also to be lined by sweet alyssum. The plan illustrated both her graphic ability and her horticultural expertise, evidenced by carefully detailed arrangement of the plants and notes concerning when to start seeds and when to replace spent plants. Shipman would later write that she approached planting design “as a painter would,” producing effects of color and texture that were innovative for the time.<sup>114</sup>

Elizabeth Billings must have been very pleased with the Long Terrace border, because she had Ellen Shipman return in the fall to plan for a similar redesign of the plantings in the Flower Garden. On October 18, 1912, Elizabeth picked up Shipman at the Woodstock train station, and together with the farm manager James Aitken, the three “planned various changes” over the next two days.<sup>115</sup> The following year, Ellen Shipman submitted a design entitled “Planting Plan of Flower Garden,” which called for a thorough replanting utilizing most of the original plan.<sup>116</sup> [Figure 4.30] Shipman called for removing the stone benches at either end of the north-south walks, and squaring off the adjoining beds, but this part of her plan was apparently not implemented. Most of the new plantings were herbaceous perennials similar to those in the Long Terrace plan, although she did add some annuals, as well as eight pyramidal Japanese yews around the center of the garden. The four interior beds were planted in like fashion, with an informal arrangement of calendulas, candytuft, columbines, daylilies, hollyhocks, German iris, larkspur, candidum lilies, petunias, peonies, phlox, pink

baby ramblers, and snapdragons. In the narrow beds bordering the exterior hemlock hedge and stone wall, Shipman used similar plants as along the hedge on the Long Terrace, including anemone, coral bells, ferns, forget-me-nots, funkia, pansies, Iceland poppies, saxifrage, and sedum. [For the complete plant list, see Appendix E.]

Ellen Shipman came back to Woodstock in July 1913, perhaps to see the completed plantings in the Terrace Gardens. When she returned to Woodstock in September 1913, August 1914, and June 1915 for work at the Congregational Church, Woodstock train station, and other projects, Elizabeth took her to see the “garden.”<sup>117</sup> The intricate perennial beds were certainly expensive and time-consuming to maintain, but Shipman’s work in the Terrace Gardens represented the continued improvement of the Mansion grounds, and one of the last substantial investments in the landscape for many years to come.

### **The Hill and Elizabeth Billings’s Wild Gardens**

Prior to Elizabeth’s involvement in the formal grounds of the Mansion terrace, much of her interest had focused on the informal and naturalistic landscape on the hill, which her father had reforested beginning in the 1870s. These plantations covered much of the hill, except at the Garden, which continued to be planted with a wide range of fruits, flowers, and vegetables. In June 1894, a visitor to the Mansion grounds described the Garden: “Part of the space devoted to the vegetable garden is laid out with new and old fashioned flowers, paeonies, gypsophillas, digitalis, delphiniums, Honesty and so on. Vegetables of every description flourish.”<sup>118</sup> [Figure 4.31] The once open character of the garden, with views to the north, and south toward the village, had largely disappeared by the 1890s due to growth of the surrounding plantations. The addition of the Terrace Gardens between 1894 and 1899 resulted in other changes to the Garden. The potted tropical plants that had adorned the Mansion lawn and the Flower Garden for the summer of 1895—the first year of the Platt project—were brought up to the Garden from the Hothouses during the summers. There may have also been fewer flowers raised in the Garden after this time, although dahlias and asters were

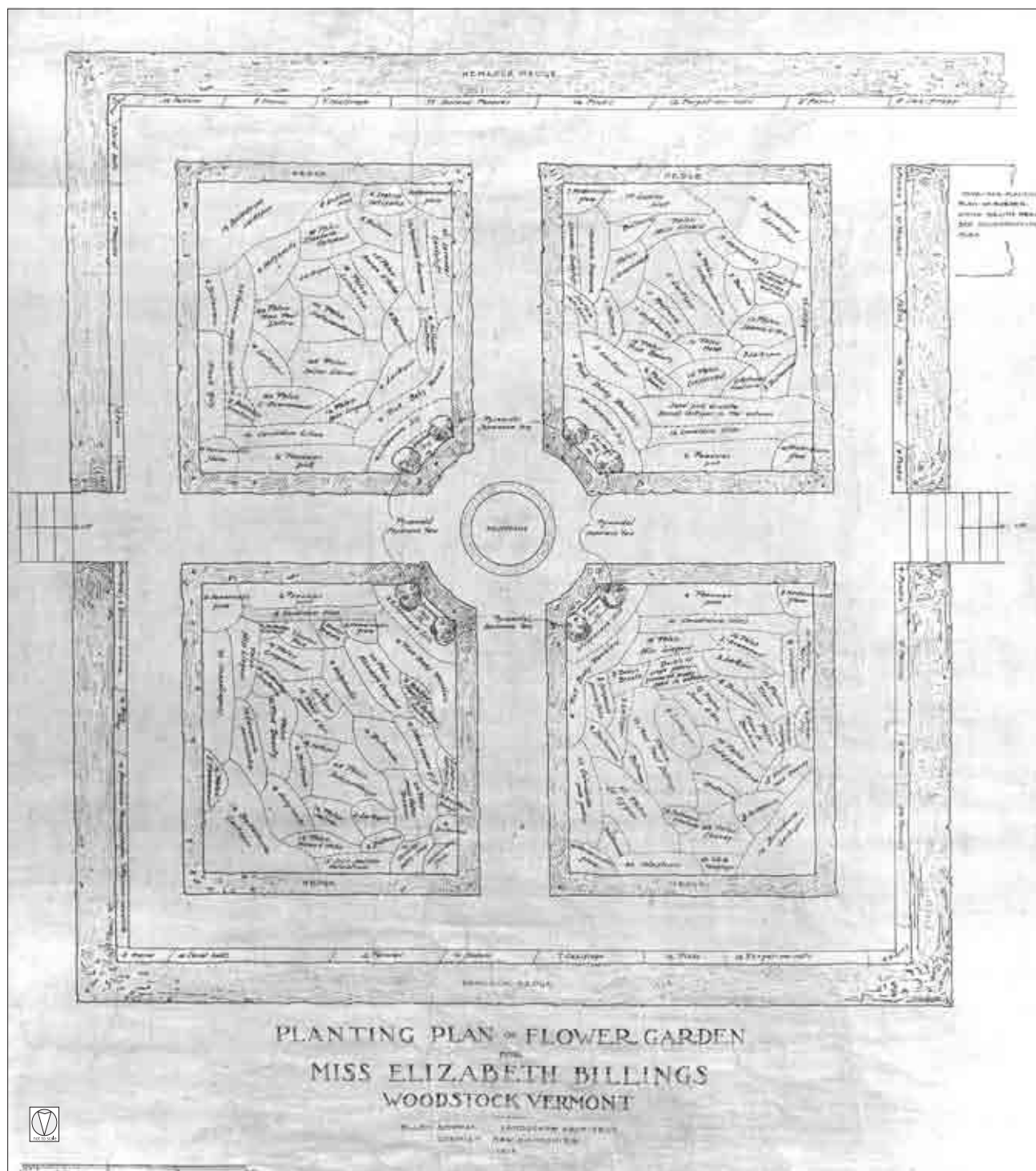


Figure 4.30: Ellen Shipman, "Planting Plan of Flower Garden for Miss Elizabeth Billings," 1913. Billings Family Archives.



**Figure 4.31: A visitor in the Garden examining dahlias, view east toward oak grove on hillside behind Mansion, c.1894. Billings Family Archives.**

planted for cutting, and alyssum was still used to ornament the edges of the beds.<sup>119</sup> Julia still called it the “Garden,” following the addition of the Terrace Gardens, but Mary Montagu and Elizabeth eventually distinguished it as the “vegetable garden.”<sup>120</sup>

More significant changes in the landscape occurred on the steep hillside east of the Garden and to the rear of the Stable, Mansion, and Hothouses. By the 1890s, this hillside had matured into a wooded landscape of Norway spruce, hemlock, and white pine, along with the old-growth grove of oak below the Reservoir. At the time, the forest plantations, under the management of George Aitken, were sufficiently mature to create an understory suitable for planting.<sup>121</sup> [Figure 4.32] It was in this wooded hillside that Elizabeth Billings, with the help of the farm staff, family, and friends, created her wild gardens over the course of the next quarter century, expanding her father’s rustic landscape around the Lily Pond.<sup>122</sup> Here she established a fern and water garden, which the family called “the Fernery,” as well as an arboretum and grass and mushroom gardens. These gardens, with their native woodland plants interspersed with interesting exotics, became favorite places for daily

walks around the Mansion grounds, but perhaps because of their wild character set mostly under cover of the woods, were not the subject of many photographs or other documentation. Elizabeth’s wild hillside gardens, however, became well known, particularly among local nature groups.

Although reflecting aspects of wild gardening popularized by Arts and Crafts designers such as Gertrude Jekyll, Elizabeth’s gardens also had a strong botanical character, evidenced by her careful plant labeling and her later work on cataloguing and preserving native flora in and around Woodstock. As a Boston newspaper noted about Elizabeth’s wild gardens, “This is but the beginnings of a work for the people in their education in natural history.”<sup>123</sup> As early as 1883, a case of botany instruments had been acquired by the estate, perhaps for Elizabeth’s use (she was then 12).<sup>124</sup> By 1892, Elizabeth was subscribing to *Garden and Forest*, and in 1894, she enrolled in a botany course at

Barnard College with her sister Laura. Through the early twentieth century, she was very active in the Vermont Botanical and Bird Clubs and the Hartland Nature Club, whose members she would often bring to see her wild gardens. A member of the Hartland club later wrote, “Elizabeth Billings would be one of its [the club’s] brightest stars, possessing that rare gift that recognizes and is able to develop hidden talents in others. . . By having three booklets printed, *Birds of Woodstock, Hartland and Vicinity*, and *The Grasses and Sedges of Woodstock*, she made permanent the observations of many enthusiastic collectors.”<sup>125</sup> Elizabeth also continued her father’s reforestation efforts, eventually purchasing a twenty-acre parcel on Mount Peg and reforesting it with over 3,200 trees. She became a life member of the American Forestry Association.<sup>126</sup>

The focus of Elizabeth’s work on the hillside was her Fernery, located above the Hothouses beneath the shade of the oak grove and Norway spruce plantations. The ori-

gin of the Fernery is not known for certain; Elizabeth may have been planting ferns and other woodland plants below the long-established canopy of the oak grove for years, perhaps as early as 1883 when the botanical instruments were purchased. By October 1893, however, Julia noted, “I saw the Hill whi [sic] has been undermined w. dynamite to save time in grading,” probably a reference to work on laying out paths and exposing rocks in the Fernery on the steep hillside above the Belvedere.<sup>127</sup> By the following year, the Fernery had been laid out, as documented by a reporter on a tour of the grounds in the spring of 1894:

**Figure 4.32: Raised understory of a Norway spruce plantation on the hill, probably taken along Garden Road above the Hothouses, c.1909. *American Forestry*, vol. XVI, no. 2 (February 1910), 83. Pictured is George Aitken.**



Plantation of Norway Spruce Thirty-two Years Old on the Billings Estate Woodstock, Vt.

*And now Mr. Carruthers leads us to a delightful spot; this is a natural wild fernery, laid out with fine winding paths among rocks and old stumps; here nearly all the wild ferns of North America are planted out, classified, and named. The garden rises to a height of 75 feet, by means of rustic steps shaded by handsome native white oak, *Quercus alba*.<sup>128</sup>*

[Figure 4.33]

The rocky slope of the fernery probably proved too dry for many types of ferns. In order to improve growing conditions and also to add visual interest to the garden, Elizabeth had a watercourse constructed on the slope by the late spring of 1897. This watercourse, which was pipe-fed from the Reservoir located just above the Fernery, consisted of a stream that cascaded down the rocks into a series of pools.<sup>129</sup> [Figure 4.34] In May 1897, the local paper *Spirit of the Age* printed the following description:

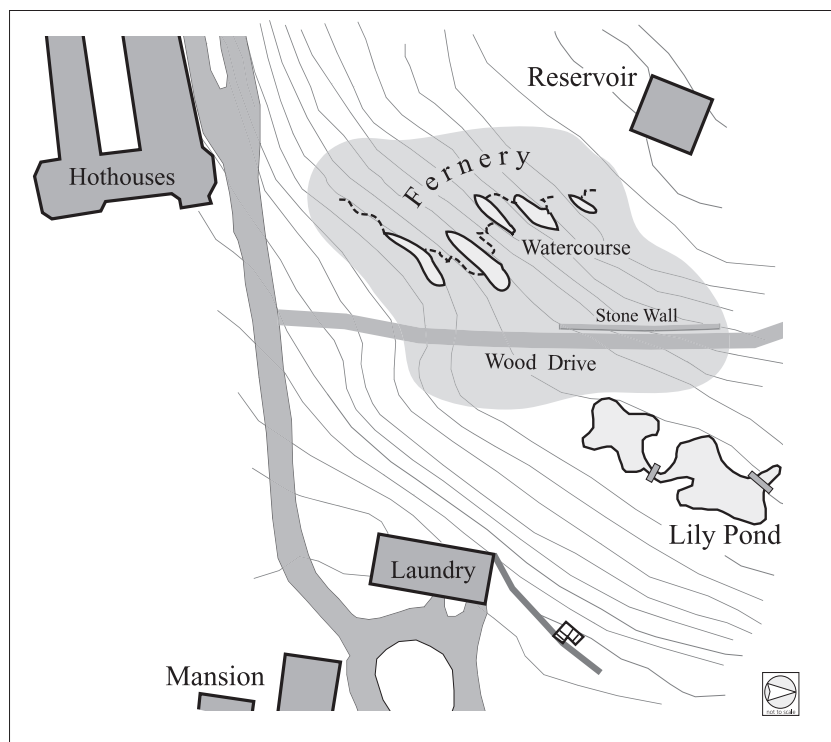
*Water has been turned to good account in adding to the beauty and attractiveness of the fernery on the Billings estate, located on the rocky hill-side just above the conservatories. From the top of the ledge a stream of water gushes forth, spreading over the rock, emptying into a little pool below. From this pool, by an unseen outlet, the water threads its way over the rocks and underground, reappearing and filling four other pools clear as crystal, forming miniativie [sic] cataracts here and there in its crooked course. As the third pool becomes filled it sinks to about one-half its usual depth, then rises again, this occurring at regular intervals of ten minutes. Ferns are planted along the course of the little stream and will add to the picturesque beauty of the place as they increase in size.<sup>130</sup>*

Over the years, Elizabeth continued to plant the Fernery with specimens she collected from local woods, as well as



Figure 4.33: View of the log steps and maidenhair ferns in Elizabeth's Fernery, c.1895. Billings Family Archives.

exotics that included plants brought from trips to Tennessee, Canada, and the Far East.<sup>131</sup> Over the course of the decade following completion of the watercourse, Elizabeth, as she wrote in 1908 for the Vermont Botanical Club, “brought together in Woodstock most of our Vermont ferns and a few from other states and foreign lands.”<sup>132</sup> At the lowest part of the Fernery below the oak grove, in a sunny spot near the Belvedere, she had sensitive ferns, and along the adjoining lowest pool, which was lined by a low limestone wall, she kept lime-loving ferns, including Maidenhair spleenwort, wall fern, rusty woodsia, walking fern, hart’s-tongue fern, and lomaria. A bank adjoining this pool was planted with royal fern, and the path leading up through the garden was lined by cinnamon fern and interrupted fern, alongside which were several Japanese ferns. Where the path diverged at the base of an oak was what Elizabeth called the “glory of the Fernery,” a bank of maidenhair fern. [Figure 4.33; Elizabeth’s 1908 description of the Fernery in Appendix C]. These and many other types of ferns Elizabeth carefully identified with zinc labels, which must have contributed to the contemplative experience of walking up the shaded, twisting paths and log steps amid the sight and sound of moving water.<sup>133</sup> Yet the Fernery was not



**Figure 4.34:** Diagram of the location and general limits of the Fernery (shown in light gray) in relation to the Hothouses, Laundry, and Lily Pond, c.1908. SUNY ESF. The exact form of the Fernery watercourse and limits of the Fernery during this period are not known. The Wood Drive was added in c.1904, probably to the design of Martha Brookes Brown.

always contemplative. Laura's birthday party on August 20, 1900 began in the house, and then moved outside to the Fernery, which was festively decorated with two hundred Japanese lanterns hung from the trees.<sup>134</sup>

Aside from the Fernery, there continued to be other improvements on the hillside during the late 1890s and first decade of the 1900s, at the same time that the neoclassical improvements were being made on the formal grounds. Between 1897 and 1899, two new paths were laid out, extending from the Fernery to the west and north.<sup>135</sup> Also in 1899, Elizabeth laid out a third path on the hillside, which began at the steps beyond the Laundry leading up to the Lily Pond, and then extended north above the Stable and Coachman's Cottage, continuing in an arc around the north slope of the hill and ending at the northeast corner of the Garden. Along this path, which Julia noted gave "charming views," Elizabeth planned an arboretum, a botanical garden

of trees apparently developed out of the existing plantation.<sup>136</sup> In July 1906, Julia noted that Elizabeth had four trees felled "above the Stable," probably to plant specimens for her arboretum. By 1907, Elizabeth had set out new labels in the arboretum, and trimmed the trees along the path, a task that was undertaken again in 1910.<sup>137</sup>

Most of the hillside paths were probably staked out by Elizabeth with the help of estate staff. In 1904, however, she sought the professional help of Martha Brookes Brown in plotting a road or path, which the landscape architect listed in her catalogue of work as a "Wood Drive."<sup>138</sup> This drive was laid out through Elizabeth's wild gardens, extending from the

Belvedere through the Fernery to the Lily Pond, and then turning west to the Garden. The Wood Drive was designed in the Arts and Crafts fashion, probably with a grass surface, and was lined by a rustic stone wall, above which Elizabeth planted ferns. Through this wall, a set of stone steps led a short distance to a ledge, which was fashioned into a rustic stone bench beneath the shade of a massive old oak.<sup>139</sup>

Aside from the Fernery, paths, arboretum, and Wood Drive, Elizabeth also worked on improving the Lily Pond into a water garden in the summer of 1901. During this time, the Mansion grounds, as well as the farm, were being supplied with a new source of water from the Pogue, which may have allowed for an increased volume of water to the Lily Pond. On August 13, 1901, Julia recorded that work on the "water garden" had begun. The main feature of the new garden was a waterfall that brought Pogue water down a rock ledge and through a small gorge that passed beneath the old stone-slab bridge at the northwest corner of the Lily Pond. A path wound up alongside the waterfall, and crossed its upper level by the addition of a second stone-slab bridge. Work continued through August, and on September 11, 1901, Julia noted that Elizabeth "turned on



Figure 4.35: The hillside swimming pool, c.1914. Courtesy of Jane McDill Smith, Woodstock, Vermont. From left to right: girl (at top of steps) unknown, John French Junior, Frederick Billings Lee, Julia Lee, Mary Montagu Billings French, Laura Billings Lee, and in the middle, John French Senior.

the water which flowed over the rocks.” Elizabeth also called the renovated Lily Pond the “water garden,” and she collected plants for it much in the way she collected for the Fernery.<sup>140</sup>

Elizabeth also established two smaller gardens, one devoted to mushrooms and one to grasses. While these were most probably located on the hillside, their exact location is unknown. In her diary, Elizabeth first mentioned her mushrooms in July 1908, when she was busy labeling them, although the estate had ordered mushroom spawn as early as 1890. In the following years, she often showed visitors her mushroom garden along with the Fernery, suggesting it was perhaps in an adjoining wooded area.<sup>141</sup> Elizabeth apparently began her grass garden in July 1910, when she ordered “labels for grasses” from “Colbe of New Jersey.” The grass garden would have been located in a sunny part of the hill, perhaps near the Lily Pond water garden or in some other clearing. She worked on “the grasses” through the summer, and installed the labels on September 13, 1910.<sup>142</sup>

Through the following years until Julia’s death in 1914, the entire eastern hillside remained one large botanical garden,

until, in 1913, the family decided to construct a swimming pool in the middle of it. To Elizabeth’s eye, the new rectangular concrete pool with its pipe and mesh fence must have detracted from the surrounding naturalistic landscape she had tended over the past twenty years, but she probably supported the project for the benefit of her young nieces and nephews, Laura and Mary Montagu’s children. The pool was built in August and September 1913 over the south

half of the Lily Pond, probably requiring removal of the old rustic wood bridge. On September 7, 1913, Laura, Mary Montagu, and their children took their first swims in the new pool.<sup>143</sup> [Figure 4.35]

## LANDSCAPE SUMMARY

Over the course of the quarter century spanning the deaths of Frederick and Julia Billings, the Billings daughters maintained the Mansion grounds together with the farm and forest as a model of rural improvement. They made additions and improvements that incorporated a new design aesthetic for the industrial age. At a time when America was just being reintroduced to neoclassical design at the World’s Columbian Exposition, the Billings were adding a garden designed by Charles A. Platt that incorporated his hallmark mix of neoclassical structure and Arts and Crafts informal plantings. The Billings daughters made additional improvements in the neoclassical style to their father’s Victorian landscape through work by Martha Brookes Brown Hutcheson and Ellen Biddle Shipman, providing both women professional opportunities at the very beginning of their careers. On the hillside, Elizabeth Billings developed extensive wild gardens, reflecting not only the family’s conservation sensibilities, but also national interest in botanical gardens and Arts and Crafts design.



While these improvements were significant additions to the landscape, none changed the overall picturesque and romantic character that Frederick Billings had developed. The Mansion, surrounded by sweeping lawns and curving drives and walks, remained the focal point of a largely wooded landscape occupying the foot of Mount Tom, overlooking the broad interval of the Ottauquechee River and the village of Woodstock. At the time of Julia Billings's death in 1914, the landscape of the Mansion grounds was at the height of its development. In subsequent decades, the landscape would no longer witness such stylish improvements. The family's continued commitment to stewardship of the land would, however, remain a persistent force in the landscape and a major reason for its long-term preservation.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Will of Frederick Billings, 10 June 1890, clauses 43, 48, 56, Billings Family Archives [hereafter, 'BFA'].

<sup>2</sup> The two surviving sons, Fritz and Richard, apparently had little to do with upkeep of the Mansion grounds during this period, perhaps due to educational and business pursuits.

<sup>3</sup> Will of Frederick Billings, clause 48.

<sup>4</sup> Will of Frederick Billings, clauses 42, 56. Billings enjoined upon them "a conservative management of the estate committed to their care." The trustees in particular were empowered by Billings to undertake all financial and legal obligations, and "to have the power and exercise the discretion that I [Frederick Billings] would have if alive."

<sup>5</sup> Will of Frederick Billings, clause 43; David A. Donath, "Legacy of Stewardship" (unpublished paper, Billings Farm & Museum, 7 August 1998), 12-14.

<sup>6</sup> Esther Munroe Swift, "Billings Farm: The Second Generation of Stewardship / Part One" (unpublished paper, April 1996, Billings Farm & Museum), 1-2.

<sup>7</sup> Will of Frederick Billings, clause 48. In his final days in the summer of 1890, Frederick Billings worried about the future of his Woodstock estate. He decided to record an unbinding memorandum outlining specific measures for conservative management, noting that he had "not sufficiently emphasized in my will my wishes about the future management of the Woodstock estate." He specified that unfinished work, such as building roads on Mount Tom, be

completed, and he stressed the need to limit expenses and increase receipts (particularly at the farm), and to care for and expand the tree plantations. The Mansion grounds, too, were to be managed in a business-like manner. Billings noted that the trustees would have no authority to give away any produce from the Garden; "There should be an understanding with regard to the regular staff of the garden and hot house, and no extra labor employed, or expenditures incurred without the consent of the Trustees. All produce, grapes, flowers, vegetables &c. not required for the family's use should be sold and the proceeds accounted for." "Notes of conversation with Mr. Billings at various times during his sickness, with reference to the management of his Estate," c.1890, A25, BFA.

<sup>8</sup> Mac Griswold and Eleanor Weller, *The Golden Age of American Gardens* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1991), 16-17, 19. A woman's place in landscape architecture at the time, however, was perceived as being limited to garden design; larger-scale site design, such as urban planning or even grading and laying out roads, was seen as a man's domain.

<sup>9</sup> Griswold and Weller, 14.

<sup>10</sup> Gertrude Jekyll, *Wood & Garden* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1899), 3.

<sup>11</sup> These six characteristics were identified by the landscape architect Frank Waugh in 1927; in Philip Pregill and Nancy Volkman, *Landscapes in History* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1993), 569.

<sup>12</sup> Rebecca Warren Davidson, "Charles A. Platt and the Fine Art of Landscape Design," in Keith Morgan, ed., *Shaping an American Landscape: The Art and Architecture of Charles A. Platt* (Hanover: University of New England, 1995), 78.

<sup>13</sup> Pregill and Volkman, 569.

<sup>14</sup> Donn Barber, Introduction to *American Country Homes and Their Gardens*, John Cordis Baker, editor (Philadelphia: House & Garden, the John C. Winston Company, 1906), 9.

<sup>15</sup> The Thompson family at their country place "Sonnenberg" in Canandaigua, New York retained the stylistic discord between the 1880s house and their new neo-classical gardens, added in 1902. A decade later in Vermont, a similar pattern was followed by the Webb family, who added neoclassical gardens adjoining their earlier Queen

Anne mansion at Shelburne Farms, their country place near Burlington. Pregill and Volkamn, 571; Griswold and Weller, 43-44.

<sup>16</sup> Wendy Hitchmough, *Arts and Crafts Gardens* (New York: Rizzoli, 1997), 7-8.

<sup>17</sup> Barber, II.

<sup>18</sup> Gertrude Jekyll, *Wood and Garden*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> Patrick Goode, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Gardens*, s. v. "Fernery."

<sup>20</sup> The Mansion library contains a late (8th) edition of Robinson's *The English Flower Garden and Home Grounds* (London: J. Murray, 1900). The book is not signed or inscribed.

<sup>21</sup> Brent Elliott, *Victorian Gardens* (Portland: Timber Press, 1986), 194-95.

<sup>22</sup> Liberty Hyde Bailey, ed., *The Standard Cyclopedia of Horticulture*, s.v. "Botanic Garden" by C. Stuart Gager.

<sup>23</sup> George Aitken to Miss Billings, 13 December 1892, Billings Farm & Museum Library [hereafter "BFM"]. A run of *Garden and Forest* from 1894 through 1897 remains in the Mansion library.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in Peter S. Jennison, *The History of Woodstock Vermont 1890-1983* (Woodstock: Published for the Woodstock Foundation by the Countryman Press, 1985), 5. Many seasonal residents took an active interest in enhancing the beauty of their homes and preserving the character of the village. Continuing their father's philanthropy in the village, Mary Montagu and Elizabeth were founding members of the Woodstock Village Improvement Society, founded in 1904, and were involved in many social and beautification efforts through the years. Jennison, 250-51.

<sup>25</sup> Jennison, 35-37, 227-29.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Jennison, 232.

<sup>27</sup> National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Forms for Shelburne Farms (John Dumville, February 1979), Hildene (B. Clark Schoettle et al., June 1977), and The Orchards (Susanne Warren, October 1999).

<sup>28</sup> A historic context of country-place development in Vermont has not been developed to date. Nancy Boone, Architectural Historian, State of Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, interview by John Auwaerter, October 2000, telephone.

<sup>29</sup> Jennison, 5.

<sup>30</sup> Julia Parmly Billings diary [hereafter, "JPB diary"], 9 September 1891, 2 September 1892, 27 June 1893, 25 June 1894, 3 July 1894, 26 October 1894, 15 June 1895, 11 September 1896, 6 October 1896, 28 July 1898, 15 August 1904, 14 September 1905, 27 July 1912; Mary Montagu Billings French diary [hereafter, "MMBF diary"], 6 & 11 August 1898, 22 September 1898; JPB Autobiographical Notes, 26 May 1904, BFA.

<sup>31</sup> Frances Duncan, "The Gardens of Cornish, *The Century Magazine*, vol. LXXII, no. 1 (May 1906), 18-19.

<sup>32</sup> Judith B. Tankard, *The Gardens of Ellen Biddle Shipman* (Sagaponack, New York: Sagapress, 1996), 13.

<sup>33</sup> Davidson, 81; Tankard, *The Gardens of Ellen Biddle Shipman*, 22.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Alma M. Gilbert and Judith Tankard, *A Place of Beauty: The Artists and Gardens of the Cornish Colony* (Berkeley, California: Ten Speed Press, 2000), 51.

<sup>35</sup> Janet Houghton, Billings family tree, unpublished paper, October 1992, Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park Library [hereafter, "MABI"].

<sup>36</sup> Acreage tallied in Sarah Wilcke et al., "Cultural Landscape Report for the Forest / Marsh Billings Rockefeller National Historical Park" (University of Vermont and Conservation Study Institute, 2000), appendix F.

<sup>37</sup> Billings Farm Memo Diary entries.

<sup>38</sup> *Vermont Standard*, news item, 29 July 1909, clipping, MABI.

<sup>39</sup> Wilcke, Appendix C.

<sup>40</sup> John H. McDill, "The Billings Farm" (unpublished paper, 1971), 2, BFM.

<sup>41</sup> David Donath, "Legacy of Stewardship" (unpublished paper, Billings Farm & Museum, 7 August 1998), 14. Franklin N. Billings (1829-1894), Frederick's brother and long-time manager of his financial matters in Woodstock, along with estate trustee Samuel Kilner (1858-1928), were also important figures in the success of the farm and forest.

<sup>42</sup> Donath, 14.

<sup>43</sup> Article on Billings Estate during meeting of Vermont Forestry Association at Woodstock, July 1909, source unknown, clipping file, MABI.

<sup>44</sup> The two living sons, Fritz and Richard, were apparently away from Woodstock quite often, although Fritz was in

town enough to occasionally help with work on the Mansion grounds and forest.

<sup>45</sup> JPB diary, 28 May 1892, 4 August 1900.

<sup>46</sup> JPB diary, 30 June 1896, 20 June 1895.

<sup>47</sup> “Lil [Elizabeth] had shrubs trimmed which John supervised “, JPB diary, 1 August 1912.

<sup>48</sup> For example, JPB diary, 10 & 12 September 1891.

<sup>49</sup> JPB diary, 2 July 1896, 23 August 1894, 27 July 1901, 16 September 1897, 17 July 1901, 27 October 1905.

<sup>50</sup> George Aitken to “whom it may concern,” 17 December 1897, BFM.

<sup>51</sup> JPB diary, 31 October 1893; 7 November 1893; *Vermont Standard*, November 1893, clipping in Miller scrapbook, photograph album A-20, BFA.

<sup>52</sup> George Aitken to J. Arthur Beebe, 7 January 1898, BFM.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Laura Billings’s first known visit to Cornish was to see the Platts, documented in her mother’s diary entry of 9 September 1891.

<sup>55</sup> JPB diary, 5 & 20 June 1891, 7 September 1892, 11 October 1892, 10 October 1898; Photographs of Mansion & piazza, P22 and album 64, BFA.

<sup>56</sup> Photographs of Mansion, P22 and album 64, BFA; Reading Nursery to George H. Mass, 12 April 1892, 8 May 1893, BFM. The receipt listed the scientific names (corresponding with the narrative list): *Amorpha fruticosa*, *Ampelopsis quinquefolia* (antiquated name for *Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), *Berberis canadensis*, *B. sieboldii*, *B. buxifolia*, and *B. stenophylla*; *Betula alba* var. *laciniata pendula*, *Calycanthus floridus*, *Cladrastis tinctoria*, *Clematis vitacella*, *Clethra alnifolia*, *Fagus sylvatica* var. *pendula*, *Hydrangea quercifolia*, *Lonicera periclymenum* var. *belgicum*, *Philadelphus gordonianus*, *Rosa rugosa*, *Spiraea van houttei*, and *Wistaria multijuga*.

<sup>57</sup> Newspaper article, “Gardeners’ Notes” [source unknown], June 1894, clipping, A31, BFA.

<sup>58</sup> Aside from Charles A. Platt, whom Laura would engage to design gardens at the Mansion grounds between 1894 and 1899, Laura also knew Jack Platt, Charles’ brother, who was a Vice President at Tiffany & Co.; his other brother, William B. Platt, a landscape architect with Olmsted Brothers in Brookline, Massachusetts, also visited Cornish and Laura may have known him as well. Most Billings family diary entries

refer to visits by or from “the Platts,” without specific mention of first names. A few are more specific, such as: “Laura wrote Chas Platt on farming matters,” JPB diary, 3 July 1894; “Laura went with J. C. [Jack] Platt to Cornish,” JPB diary, 14 October 1895, etc. In 1898, Mary Montagu Billings worked closely with Jack Platt on the renovation of the family’s home at 279 Madison Avenue in New York City. MMBF diary, 6 August 1898 et seq; Charles A. Platt (II) to John Auwaerter, 10 March 2001.

<sup>59</sup> Davidson, 75-76, 80-81.

<sup>60</sup> List of Platt commissions in Keith N. Morgan, *Charles A. Platt: The Artist as Architect* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), 241-42.

<sup>61</sup> The only documented visit of the Billings to Saint-Gaudens was by Mary Montagu in August 1898, MMBF diary, 11 August 1898.

<sup>62</sup> JPB diary, 6-14 July 1893; “A ‘Spanish garden’—this is an idea picked up by Miss Billings [Laura Billings] in her eastern travels and which she is developing on ‘The Hill.’ *Spirit of the Age*, 27 April 1895, BFA. This is the only known reference to the Terrace Gardens being inspired by Spanish precedent.

<sup>63</sup> Platt historian Keith N. Morgan of Boston University has reviewed documentation on the Flower Garden, and is “firmly convinced” that it is the work of Charles A. Platt. Keith N. Morgan to John Auwaerter, 13 February 2001. See letter in Appendix D.

<sup>64</sup> JPB diary, 1 November 1894; George Aitken referred to submitting a “plan of Flower Garden” to a contractor in February 1895, George Aitken to Parmeter Manufacturing Company, 11 February 1895. The plan has not survived.

<sup>65</sup> Morgan to Auwaerter, 13 February 2001.

<sup>66</sup> George Aitken to Miss Billings, 19 December 1894 and 25 March 1895; Aitken to S. E. Kilner, 2 January 1895, BFM; Billings Farm Memo Diary, January 1895. The Garden Shed was also known as the Stone Shed. Janet Houghton, “Local Gazetteer” (Unpublished paper, c.1986, revised 2002), 6, MABI.

<sup>67</sup> George Aitken to Parmenter (also spelled “Parmeter” on correspondence] Manf’g Co., 11 February 1895; George Aitken to Miss Billings, 7 and 25 March 1895, BFM.

<sup>68</sup> *Spirit of the Age*, 27 April 1895, BFA.

<sup>69</sup> Photograph of Mary Montagu in Flower Garden with

dogs, c.1897, P23, BFA; George Aitken to Miss [Laura] Billings, 26 October 1897, BFM; Billings Farm Memo Diary, November 1896, April 1898.

70 Platt's plan for the main walk bench with volute arms survives in the Billings Family Archives.

<sup>71</sup> Billings Farm Memo Diary, April and May 1898; JPB diary, 8 July 1898.

<sup>72</sup> George Aitken to Mr. Charles A. Platt, 21 March 1898, 3 May 1898, 19 July 1898; Billings Farm Fiscal Receipts, Charles A. Platt to Miss Laura Billings, 6 December 1898, BFM.

<sup>73</sup> Billings Farm Memo Diary, May 1899; JPB diary, 9 June 1899.

<sup>74</sup> Photographs of Flower Garden, c.1899, Julia McDill album; JPB diary, 3 July 1899.

<sup>75</sup> Photographs of Long Terrace, c.1898-1901, Julia McDill album; P22, BFA.

<sup>76</sup> The following account of the Hothouses was published in 1894: *Under the guidance of Mr. Robert Carruthers, the able gardener, we continue our trip. The first house erected, a large octagon, contained a bench of calceolaria, and as fine a show of this class of tender annuals as I ever saw; some of them three feet across, in endless colors and varieties. A collection of gloxinias just in their glory filled another bench; on 17 different plants I counted 36 open flowers, with foliage 18 inches long. In the center of the house was a raised staging filled with Hydrangeas, Otaksa and Thos Hogg, and towering above them was a fine display of standard fuchsias. A rose house contained 900 young plants in the best of condition. A house of tuberous begonias next caught my attention. Some of the plants were two feet through, and covered with handsome spikes of flowers, many singles measuring from four to seven inches across and doubles from two to four inches. A house filled with fine specimen azaleas and camelias, and a nice violet and mignonette pit were then noted. Coming to another range of houses, the first we enter was given over to peach and nectarine trees, which are looking superb; the grapery, stocked with Muscat of Alexander and other varieties, among which Gros Maroe, Lady Downer, and Gros Colman, is a sight to behold. A house of Black Hamburgs was nearly all cut but still had a few fine bunches hanging. In the stove house [Tropical House] the center is filled with beautiful palms, pandanus, bertolonia . . . and a*

*host of other beauties; the roof is covered by allamanda, suspended below which is a fine collection of orchids. "Gardener's Notes," June 1894, BFA.*

<sup>77</sup> George Aitken to Miss Billings, 20 December 1895, Aitken Correspondence; Billings Farm Memo Diary, August 1895, October 1897; Lord & Burnham for greenhouse putty and glazing points, 12 & 22 August 1898, George Aitken to Boston Plate and Window Glass Company for greenhouse glass, 9 August 1898, Billings Farm Fiscal Receipts.

<sup>78</sup> JPB diary, 18 August 1900.

<sup>79</sup> Lord & Burnham Company plans, c.1900, BFA.

<sup>80</sup> "It was expected that the Billings palm house [Octagon], rose house, and fernery [Tropical House], which were torn down recently, would be rebuilt before this, but there was unavoidable delay. The foundations have been rebuilt, of the same size as before, and the new greenhouses will be of iron and glass, instead of wood and glass, and will be of a more modern design." *Vermont Standard*, 18 October 1900; MABI database; "Ehrick [Parmly, nephew of Julia] was out early watching the rebuilding of our Green house," JPB diary, 20 October 1900.

<sup>81</sup> Lord & Burnham Greenhouse contract," Billings Farm Memo Diary, November 1901; JPB diary, 4 July 1902, 1 October 1902; JPB Autobiographical Notes, 3 October 1902.

<sup>82</sup> Panoramic photograph of the Mansion grounds from Mount Peg, c.1905, BFA. The Belvedere is shown in dark colors contrasting with the white of the new Hothouses.

<sup>83</sup> *Spirit of the Age*, 16 March 1895, MABI database.

<sup>84</sup> George Aitken to Miss Billings, 25 March 1895, BFM.

<sup>85</sup> JPB diary, 23 & 28 May 1894; George Aitken to Miss Billings, 23 November 1894.

<sup>86</sup> "Gardeners' Notes," unidentified newspaper clipping, June 1894, BFA.

<sup>87</sup> George Aitken to Miss [Laura] Billings, 21 & 23 November 1894, 25 January 1895.

<sup>88</sup> JPB diary, 9 June 1899.

<sup>89</sup> On July 18, 1901, Julia noted, "Mary gave a good deal of time to learning to use the automobile & found it far less desirable & more difficult & dangerous than she expected." By July 22nd, Mary Montagu was driving "with more confidence." JPB diary, 17, 18, 22, 27 July 1901; Janet Houghton, personal communication with John Auwaerter,

4 February 2002.

<sup>90</sup> JPB diary, 8 & 9 September 1902.

<sup>91</sup> Shary Page Berg, "Cultural Landscape Report for Longfellow National Historic Site, Volume 2" (National Park Service, 1999), 39.

<sup>92</sup> Rebecca Warren Davidson, "The Spirit of the American Garden: Landscape and Cultural Expression in the Work of Martha Brookes Hutcheson," *Journal of the New England Garden History Society* (Spring 1996) 22-23.

<sup>93</sup> Martha Brown, "Plan for Planting and New Driveways and Footpath," 1902, BFA. Brown would not list this plan among her principal works in her correspondence with the ASLA, nor would she mention it in her book, *Spirit of the Garden*. Foulds et al., "Land Use History for Marsh-Billings National Historical Park," 56.

<sup>94</sup> Davidson, 25.

<sup>95</sup> Martha Brookes Hutcheson, *The Spirit of the Garden* (Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1923), 85.

<sup>96</sup> Hutcheson, *The Spirit of the Garden*, 119.

<sup>97</sup> "Mattie Frank & Mr. Aitken planned a change of road near the laundry." JPB diary, 30 July 1903. Little record remains on the implementation of Brown's plan.

<sup>98</sup> Martha Brookes Brown to George Aitken, 27 April 1904, 4 June 1904, 14 July 1904, BFM.

<sup>99</sup> JPB diary, 9 June 1905. Little documentation exists on the implemented Brown design. A 1909 photograph of the entrance drive looking west from Elm Street shows the drive lined by deciduous shrubs and a young Norway spruce in the middle of the circle, P22, BFA.

<sup>100</sup> The Dundee Nursery [location not noted] to Mr. Geo Atkin [sic], 25 November 1904, 7 December 1904, BFM.

<sup>101</sup> Hutcheson, *The Spirit of the Garden*, 83. Martha Brown visited the Mansion grounds on July 25-27, 1905, as recorded in the Mansion Guest Book, MABI.

<sup>102</sup> JPB diary, 20 October 1905.

<sup>103</sup> Billings Farm Memo Diary, July 1908. No information has been found on the architect of this building.

<sup>104</sup> Billings Farm Memo Diary, September 1908. No information has been found on who designed or manufactured the lanterns on the stone posts.

<sup>105</sup> Elizabeth Billings diary [hereafter, EzB diary], 1, 3, & 24 August 1912; Billings Farm memo Diary, October 1912; JPB diary, 21 October 1912.

<sup>106</sup> EzB diary, 30 June 1909.

<sup>107</sup> JPB diary, 28 July 1898; MMBF diary, 22 September 1898.

<sup>108</sup> JPB diary, 18 October 1912; EzB diary, 18 October 1912, 25 September 1913, 18 June 1915, 20 May 1916.

<sup>109</sup> Tankard, *The Gardens of Ellen Biddle Shipman*, chapter 2; 29-30.

<sup>110</sup> Tankard, *The Gardens of Ellen Biddle Shipman*, 3.

<sup>111</sup> Mansion Guest Book, September 1911.

<sup>112</sup> EzB diary, 3 & 5 August 1910, 20 October 1910.

<sup>113</sup> A blueprint of the "Flower Border" plan is in the Billings Family Archives. This is the earliest known professional plan by Shipman, based on review of her papers at Cornell University.

<sup>114</sup> Robin Karson, *The Muses of Gwinn* (Sagaponack, NY: Sagapress, 1995), 32.

<sup>115</sup> JPB diary, 18 October 1912; EzB diary, 18 & 19 October 1912.

<sup>116</sup> Blueprint copy, "Planting Plan of Flower Garden for Miss Elizabeth Billings Woodstock Vermont Ellen Shipman Landscape Architect Cornish New Hampshire 1913," BFA. The plan incorrectly shows the hemlock hedge extending around the entire garden above the perimeter walls, and does not show benches and quarter-round edges at either end of the north-south walk. The original ink on linen plan is in the Shipman papers at Cornell University.

<sup>117</sup> EzB diary, 24 September 1913, 27 August 1914, 18 June 1915. There is not much documentation on the implementation of the Shipman plans for the Terrace Gardens. According to photographs from the 1920s, the plantings were done as evidenced by the pyramidal yew around the fountain, P22, BFA.

<sup>118</sup> "Gardeners' Notes," unidentified newspaper clipping, June 1894, BFA

<sup>119</sup> Photographs of the Garden, c.1898, Rhoda Teagle album, BFM; c.1900, Album 64, BFA.

<sup>120</sup> For example: JPB diary, 22 July 1900, EzB diary, 24 June 1911, MMBF diary, 15 June 1935.

<sup>121</sup> "I had spruce trees thinned out at the west end of the greenhouse today . . ." George Aitken to Laura Billings, 21 November 1894, BFM.

<sup>122</sup> Julia used the term "wild garden:" "Lily [Elizabeth] went w. me to find a plant for her wild garden . . ." JPB diary, 1 July 1896.

<sup>123</sup> *Boston Evening Transcript*, “The Mountaineer” column, 9 September 1911, clipping MABI.

<sup>124</sup> Billings Farm Fiscal records, July 1883, referenced in the Cultural Landscape Report for the Forest (University of Vermont, 2000), 63.

<sup>125</sup> Quoted in Jennison, 76.

<sup>126</sup> George Aitken to Miss Billings, 13 December 1892, BFM. A run of *Garden and Forest* from 1894 through 1897 remains in the Mansion library; Jennison, 251; Forest CLR, 75.

<sup>127</sup> JPB diary, 31 October 1893.

<sup>128</sup> Newspaper clipping by “Brother in American Gardening,” source unknown, June 1894, MABI.

<sup>129</sup> [Just arriving at the Hill] “we saw the water gardens & others. JPB diary, 19 June 1901. ] Although it was an integral part of the Fernery, the family also referred to the water-course along with the Lily Pond as one of the “water gardens.”

<sup>130</sup> *Spirit of the Age*, 29 May 1897, clipping, BFA.

<sup>131</sup> JPB diary, 29 June 1894, 30 April 1895, 21 September 1898. Elizabeth brought back “Japanese ferns” from the Far East trip.

<sup>132</sup> Elizabeth Billings, “My Fernery,” Vermont Botanical Club *Bulletin*, vol. 3, 1908, 27-28.

<sup>133</sup> “200 Zinc Labels, extra lg., \$4.40, 2000 Labels 5 in painted \$2.00”, R. & J. Farquhar & Co., Boston to Estate of F. Billings, 27 November 1894, BFM; George Aitken to Farquhar [sic] & Co., 17 May 1898, BFM.

<sup>134</sup> JPB diary, 20 August 1900.

<sup>135</sup> “Saw Lil’s fernery w. her. She & Norman [Williams] went up the new trail.” JPB diary, 19 June 1897; In p.m. L.[aura] E.[Elizabeth] & I walked over the new path north of the fernery.” JPB diary, 3 September 1899.

<sup>136</sup> JPB diary, 5 October 1899; examination of existing path (2001). No further documentation was found on the Arboretum.

<sup>137</sup> EzB diary, 8 & 20 July 1907, July 1910, JPB diary, 28 July 1906. The last known reference to the Arboretum is Elizabeth’s entry of 9 September 1913: “Looked over arboretum.”

<sup>138</sup> Martha Brookes Brown Hutcheson, Professional Record, 1904, “Billings Miss Eliz. Woodstock Vt.-Plotted wood drive positions etc.” Hutcheson papers, Morris

County Park Commission, Morristown, New Jersey; JPB diary, 25 September 1904, 11 October 1904, 7 September 1905. No documentation has been found linking this “wood drive” with the existing road leading up the hillside from the Belvedere. However, Elizabeth Billings’s involvement suggests the drive was probably located on the hillside where she developed her naturalistic gardens; and this hillside drive was the only new drive to appear within the Mansion grounds during the first decade of the 1900s.

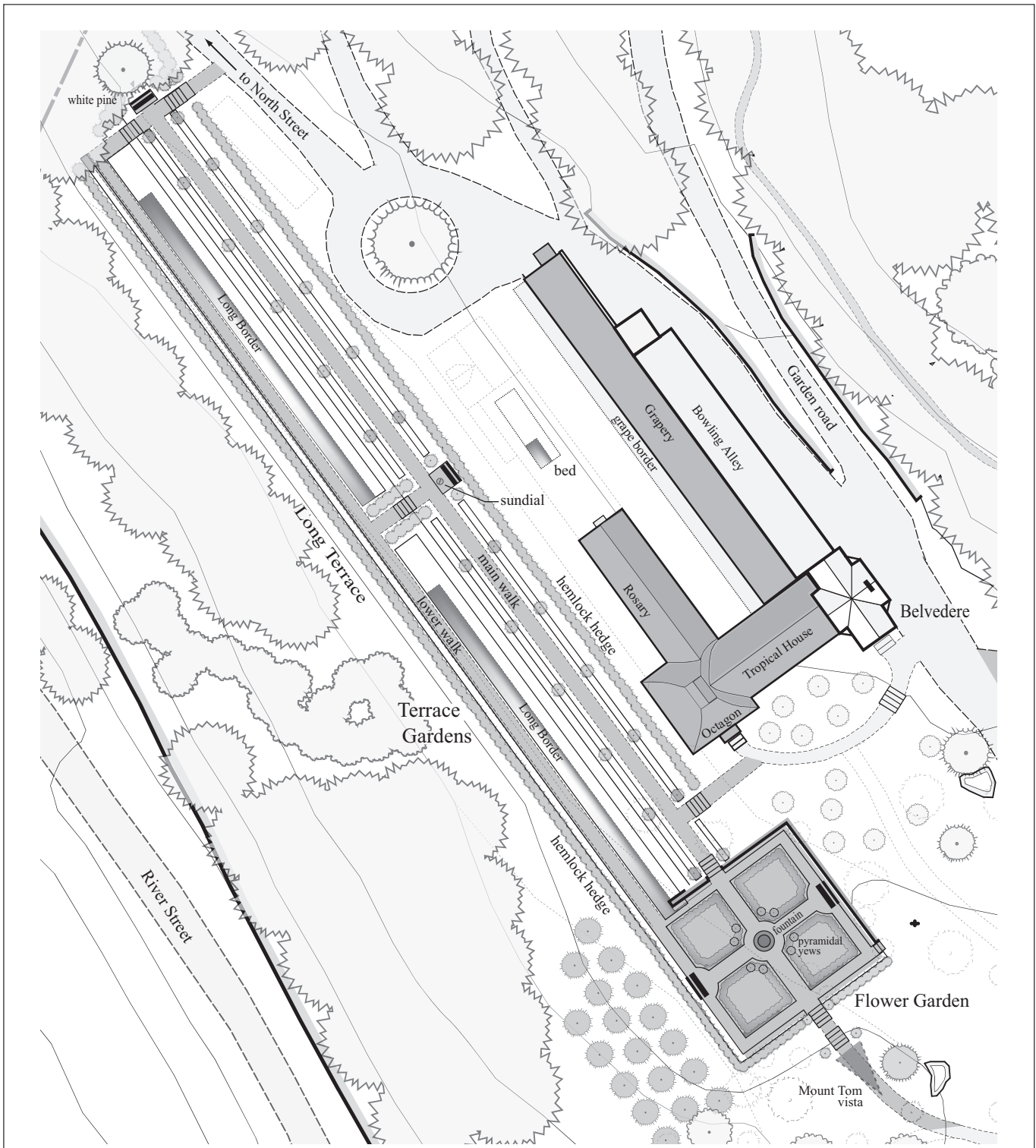
<sup>139</sup> No documentation was found on whether Brown had any involvement in the design of this stone wall and bench.

<sup>140</sup> JPB diary, 11 September 1901, 28 July 1902, 6 September 1903; “Earlier I sent 7 bunches of water lilies”, EzB diary, 1 August 1909; “Looked for plants in water garden”, EzB diary, 4 August 1908; The farm staff continued to work on the water garden in May 1902 and May 1903. Billings Farm Memo Diary, August 1901, May 1902, May 1903. No historic photographs or plans of the Lily Pond water garden have been found.

<sup>141</sup> EzB diary, 23 July 1908, 24 September 1908, 5 August 1912, 16 October 1912; Receipt, Peter Henderson & Co. to Frederick Billings, “32 lbs. mushroom spawn,” 18 April 1890.

<sup>142</sup> EzB diary, 8, 11, 15 July 1910, 13 September 1910.

<sup>143</sup> Billings Farm Memo Diary, August & September 1913; JPB diary, 7 September 1913; photograph of pool Mansion Guest Book, May-June 1916, MABI.



Cultural Landscape Report  
for the Mansion Grounds

The Estate Era  
1890-1914

Terrace Gardens Detail

Figure 4.37

**SOURCES**

Estate of Frederick Billings, maps 1 & 2 (Doton et al., 1887-88)  
Contours on Property of Mary F. Rockefeller (Williams, 1956)  
Topo. Plan Mansion Grounds (Bruno, 2001)

**NOTES**

All vegetation shown in approximate scale and location. Names indicated are those used during the period, when known. Plan illustrates conditions in 1890.

**LEGEND**

	Added during period		Assumed feature		Removed during period		10' contour		Unpaved road/path		Conifer plantation		Conifer tree/shrub		Deciduous tree/shrub		Herbaceous bed		Rock outcropping		Stone wall		Fence/gate		Hydrant		Lamppost		Bench
--	---------------------	--	-----------------	--	-----------------------	--	-------------	--	-------------------	--	--------------------	--	--------------------	--	----------------------	--	----------------	--	------------------	--	------------	--	------------	--	---------	--	----------	--	-------

**DRAWN BY**

John Auwaerter Illustrator 10, 2004



# Cultural Landscape Report for the Mansion Grounds

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park

## The Estate Era 1890-1914



**National Park Service  
Olmsted Center for  
Landscape Preservation**

99 Warren Street, Brookline, MA

in cooperation with:

Faculty of Landscape Architecture  
SUNY College of Environmental  
Science and Forestry  
Syracuse, New York

### SOURCES

Estate of Frederick Billings, maps  
1 & 2 (Doton et al., 1887-88)  
Contours on Property of Mary  
F. Rockefeller (Williams, 1956)  
Topo. Plan Mansion Grounds  
(Bruno, 2001)

### DRAWN BY

John Auwaerter  
Illustrator 10, 2004

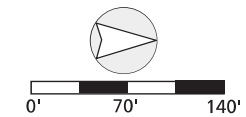
### LEGEND

- Added during period
- Assumed feature
- Removed during period
- 10' contour
- Intermittent stream
- Deciduous woods
- Conifer plantation
- Conifer tree/shrub
- Deciduous tree/shrub
- Herbaceous bed
- Unpaved road/path
- Rock outcropping
- Stone wall
- Fence/gate
- Hydrant
- Lamppost
- Bench

### NOTES

All vegetation shown in approximate scale and location.  
Names indicated are those used during the period, when known.  
Plan illustrates conditions in 1914.

Figure 4.36







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## V. THE FRENCH-BILLINGS ERA, 1914-1954

The death of Julia Billings on February 17, 1914 at the age of seventy-eight brought into effect the second phase of Frederick Billings's will, which required the division of the Woodstock estate among his surviving children: Laura Billings Lee, Mary Montagu Billings French, Elizabeth Billings, and Richard Billings. Since both Laura and Richard had already received portions of the estate as their own country places, the Mansion grounds and adjoining Mount Tom lands came under the joint ownership of Mary Montagu and Elizabeth. [Figures 5.1, 5.2] They would maintain the Mansion grounds, but their father's vision of conservation and rural improvement would prove difficult to continue due to financial constraints, the family's changing needs and preferences, decline of country-place society, and the larger ramifications of world wars and economic depression.

Over the four decades spanning the deaths of Julia Billings and Mary Montagu Billings French, the Billings Estate lost much of its purpose as a model farm, but Elizabeth and the French family continued to maintain the farm, Mount Tom forest, and Mansion grounds as their seasonal country place. While Mary Montagu had a keen interest in nature and landscape, it was largely Elizabeth who maintained the gardens on the terraces and hillside. Following her death in 1944, much of the gardening ceased, and the landscape was maintained at a minimum, to be partially revived five years later when Mary Montagu hired Carl Bergstrom as head gardener. After she died in 1951, the estate took several years to settle, but the Mansion grounds would fortunately fall to another generation of good stewards.

### WOODSTOCK IN THE LATE COUNTRY-PLACE ERA

In the economic prosperity of the 1920s, rural areas adjoining large cities witnessed a proliferation of grand residences set on expansive grounds, rivaling the boom years prior to

the war. Many of these country places were no longer just for the summers, as they had been in the late nineteenth century, but became year-round suburban retreats, within easy commuting distance of the major cities because of improved transportation. In the profession of landscape architecture, the design of country places continued to supply much of the work of the period. Although a broad range of styles was evident, the unity of Neoclassical and Arts and Crafts design



Figure 5.1: Mary Montagu Billings French at her desk in the Mansion, c.1950. Billings Family Archives.

that Charles Platt had pioneered remained the dominant treatment of formal grounds. Naturalistic and idealized rural design, with its roots in the mid nineteenth century, continued to be a favorite scheme for the larger grounds away from the main houses.

The Country-Place Era would not, however, last beyond the end of the prosperous 1920s.<sup>1</sup> Following the panic of 1929, and with the ensuing Great Depression and revisions to federal tax policy, few grand country residences were developed. Landscape architects increasingly turned to the public sector for work. After the Second World War, the rural areas surrounding major cities, which had been favorite locations for country places, were typically suburbanized, with large estates often subdivided for

middle-class housing developments. Country places in more remote areas often fell into decline or found new life through tourism. In Vermont, tourism was increasingly important to the economy because of the decline in erstwhile dominant agriculture; between 1910 and 1950, the portion of Vermont devoted to farmland dropped from 79 to 59 per cent.<sup>2</sup> The diversification of seasonal homes in the state was already apparent by 1931. In this year, the Vermont Commission on Country Life published that seasonal homes in the state varied “from little shacks used as fishing camps, hunting lodges or inexpensive cottages, to extensive and costly estates owned by persons of large wealth.”<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 5.2: Elizabeth Billings at the Terrace Gardens, 1924. Billings Family Archives. View is east from the Long Terrace through the Flower Garden toward the Mansion.**



Prior to the Great Depression, Woodstock remained a desirable location for country places due in large part to its historic charm and natural scenic beauty, with society life centered on the Woodstock Inn and the Woodstock Country Club. In 1918, twenty millionaires were purportedly living in and around the village, but with the Great Depression and changes in transportation, however, these numbers soon decreased.<sup>4</sup> Aside from the introduction of automobiles around the turn of the century, the most significant change in transportation in Woodstock was the termination of the Woodstock Railroad—once the preferred mode of long-distance travel for country-place society—in 1934. Its rail bed was subsequently developed into part of highway US 4, the main east-west crossroad through central Vermont. Two years later, Elm Street and the old Woodstock and Royalton Turnpike were designated as State Route 12 and improved into a paved highway

soon thereafter.<sup>5</sup> Automobiles allowed remote villages such as Woodstock to become more accessible to middle-class tourists, who added a new dimension to the resort economy, the development of which was perceived by many residents—especially the old-time country-place residents—as a threat to the character of the village.

At the same time as the changes in transportation and country-place society were occurring, there was growing interest in the region’s recreational opportunities. In 1934, the first ski tow in the United States was opened in Woodstock, and within six years, there were ten such tows in the town. Woodstock soon became known as the cradle of the winter sports industry, making the village a year-round tourist destination.<sup>6</sup> By the late 1930s, Woodstock had three hotels (the White Cupboard Inn at Elm and Central Streets earned a popular American Automobile Association



Figure 5.3: Central Street and the AAA-approved White Cupboard Inn (left), a product of Woodstock's tourist industry. Photography by Marion Post Walcott, 1940. Woodstock Historical Society.

accreditation), several small inns, and many tourist homes. [Figure 5.3] Yet the village as a whole placed great value on preserving its historic charm and natural beauty. In 1937, the federal Works Progress Administration published an account of Woodstock that reflected the dominant value the community placed on preservation during this time of transition:

*Woodstock is the village which probably more than any other in Vermont has reverently preserved both the physical setting and the spiritual flavor of an earlier day. Long one of the favorite summer resorts in the State and recently a center of winter sports development, Woodstock has nevertheless retained the somewhat astringent quality of its native personality. Its instinctive reaction to change is negative.<sup>7</sup>*

Perhaps due to this dominant sentiment in the community, Elizabeth Billings and Mary Montagu Billings French probably felt renewed importance in continuing the family's tradition of stewardship for their estate, which was

so important to the setting of the village. With the decline of country-place society in the village, however, the two women may have felt little need to continue improving the Mansion grounds; rather they sought to maintain the Mansion, forest, and farm as relics of an earlier day. Many in the extended Billings family during this era thought of the Mansion not as a model rural home, but rather as a place "out in the sticks."<sup>8</sup> As Woodstock and the surrounding region became better known for modest second homes and for the recreational opportunities afforded by its natural resources, formal country-place landscapes—especially only if used for part of the year—were probably seen as anachronisms. Indeed, it was not the formal landscape of the Mansion grounds, but rather the publicly accessible Mount Tom forest with its system of roads that the community apparently most valued, as evidenced by one resident who wrote Mary Montagu in 1947:

Mt. Tom is of inestimable benefit to Woodstock and vicinity. To the community as a vacation resort there is no doubt but what Mt. Tom is one of the very finest assets. I am sure that the people as a whole are most grateful to the Billings family for making such ample provision for their happiness and welfare.<sup>9</sup>

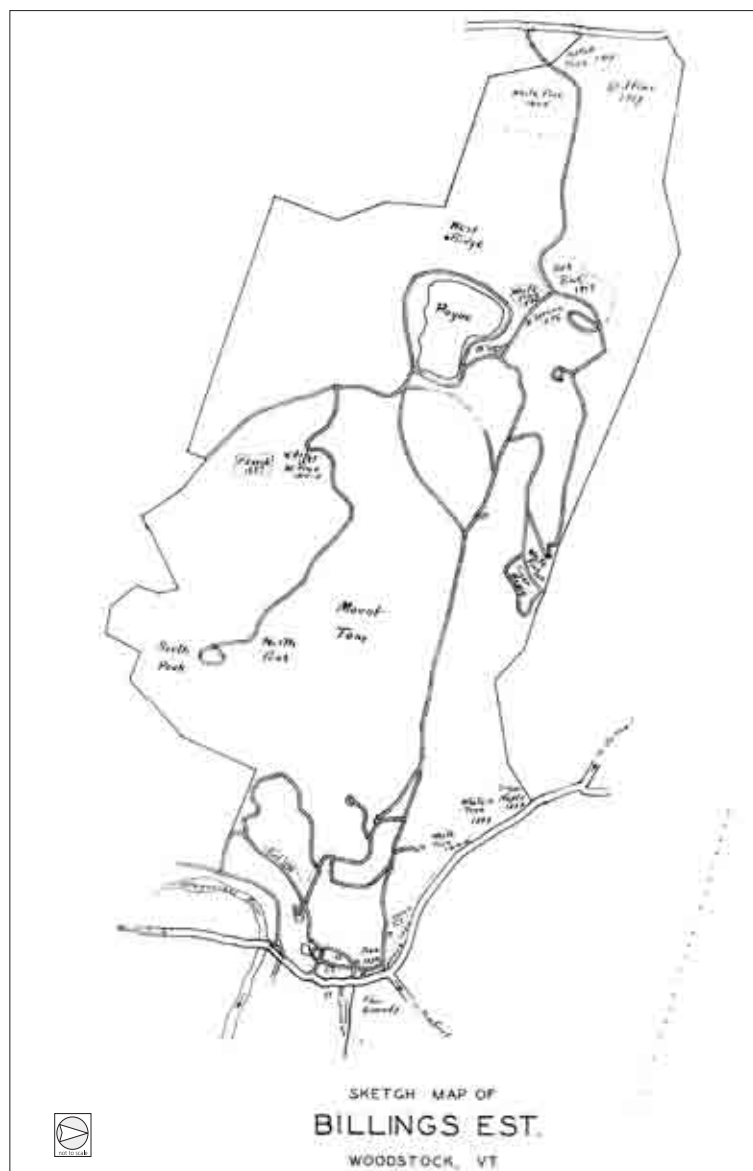
#### **THE BILLINGS FAMILY AND DIVISION OF THE WOODSTOCK ESTATE, 1914-1954**

Frederick Billings's will stipulated that following the death of Julia, his estate would be "equally divided among my children share and share alike according to law." He did not specify what portions of the estate should go to whom, but did, however, make several general wishes, including his desire that "the Woodstock Estate . . . may be kept in some way for many years, perhaps for generations to come in the family, or some member of the family." Frederick Billings also hoped that "at least the home and all the land on the upper side of the road, between the road leading up the Quechee and that leading to Pomfret [Mansion grounds and Mount Tom lands] may not be sold. . ."<sup>10</sup> He apparently foresaw that the family might need to cease the farm operation.

In 1914, Laura and her husband Frederic Lee were already well established in their Charles A. Platt-designed country place off River Road at the eastern end of the estate, and it was this land that Laura received in the division. Richard and his wife May had received the portion of the estate between the Mansion grounds and the Lee's, north of Barnard Brook (then known as Beaver Creek), including the main part of the farm on the Ottauquechee River inter-

vale.<sup>11</sup> Mary Montagu and Elizabeth received title to the largest portion of the property: the Mansion grounds and the Mount Tom lands.<sup>12</sup> [Figure 5.4] Despite the division of the estate, the second-generation Billings family continued to have a strong attachment to Woodstock—their childhood home—although their adult lives revolved to a greater degree around their winter homes in and around New York City.

**Figure 5.4:** Map of the Billings Estate showing carriage roads and forest plantations, c.1917. Billings Family Archives. The outlined area corresponds to the land received by Elizabeth and Mary Montagu in the division of the estate, with the Mansion grounds at the bottom of the map.



Elizabeth and Mary Montagu continued to reside at the Billings city home at 279 Madison Avenue for a number of years following Julia's death. This house was emptied in the early 1920s, when Mary Montagu purchased a new residence for her family and Elizabeth, a row of three connected townhouses at 140-144 East 38th Street. In addition to this city home, Mary Montagu and John French owned a suburban house in Greenwich, Connecticut, which they had built in c.1910 to the design of architect H. Van Buren Magonigle, who would later design a rustic bungalow on the Mansion grounds.<sup>13</sup> The Greenwich residence apparently served as a weekend home for the French family and Elizabeth Billings.

During the decades following their mother's death, Mary Montagu and Elizabeth remained well-known figures in Woodstock and were active in organizations such as the Woodstock Historical Society, Village Improvement Society, Woodstock Country Club, and the Congregational Church. Mary Montagu, known as "Mrs. French," continued the Billings tradition of hospitality, often receiving callers and giving teas on the Mansion piazza.<sup>14</sup> After her husband John died in 1935 at the age of 71, she continued her annual schedule of summers in Woodstock and winters in New York City and Greenwich. Mrs. French was perhaps best known outside of Woodstock for serving on the National Board of the Y.W.C.A. continuously from its founding. She maintained her strong interest in nature balanced by an equally strong

interest in social life; in the words of her daughter Mary Rockefeller: “Mother found continuing joy, courage and wisdom in the serenity of nature, and in the spiritual beauty of mankind.”<sup>15</sup> She was a talented watercolor artist of nature and landscape subjects, and also wrote about spiritual subject matters, often concerning the natural world. In 1948, she had a collection of her writings entitled *A Little About a Number of Things*, published in Woodstock. Chapters dealing with nature included “The Ginkgo Tree,” “A Spring Harvest,” “The Flight of Birds,” and “Grass,” among others.

Elizabeth, known locally as “Miss Lily” or “Miss Billings,” remained very active with nature and conservation issues throughout the decades following her mother’s death, portending future ecological philosophy in conservation. She was especially concerned with preserving rare native plants. In 1917, she sought professional assistance to document the native flowering plants of Woodstock; she had already by this time assembled two hundred mounted specimens. Through her contacts with the New York Botanical Garden, where she had studied grasses, Elizabeth engaged the services of its assistant curator, Elsie Kittredge, an accomplished botanist and artist. Over the years, Elizabeth instructed her to collect, mount, and record all flowering plants, ferns, lichens, hepatics, mosses, and weeds growing within six miles of Woodstock. Elizabeth and Elsie Kittredge assembled a collection of 1127 mounted specimens and 932 hand-colored photographs in a collection entitled the “Flora of Woodstock,” and later known as the Billings-Kittredge Herbarium.<sup>16</sup> [Figure 5.5]

As Elizabeth did not marry, it was Mrs. French’s family who became the third generation to live on the Mansion grounds. Mary Montagu and John French had three children: John (1909-1984), Mary (1910-1997), and Elizabeth (“Liz,” 1912-1976). Their cousins—Richard and May Billings’s daughter Pauline (1910-1986), and Laura and Frederick Lee’s children Julia (1904-1994) and Frederick (1906-1992)—were familiar visitors, but did not live on the grounds. These descendents of Frederick and Julia Billings dominated family life at the Mansion grounds through the 1920s. By the 1930s, when the cousins were grown, the



Figure 5.5: A mounted specimen from the Billings-Kittredge Herbarium, *Rosa humilllis*, var. *villosa*, collected by Elizabeth Billings and Elsie Kittredge on July 20, 1920. Billings Family Archives.

family dynamic began to change once again. Richard Billings died suddenly in 1931, followed by John French (I) in 1935, Laura Lee in 1938, Frederic Lee in 1939, and Elizabeth Billings in 1944. Mary Montagu, who died in 1951 at age 82, survived longest of the Billings children. Richard’s wife May lived until 1965.<sup>17</sup> [Billings family tree, Appendix B]

When the French children reached adulthood and married, it was primarily Liz’s family who continued to spend the summers at the Mansion grounds. Liz married Ethan Allen Hitchcock in 1937 and raised two daughters, Constance (born 1940) and Polly (born 1944). Liz and her daughters lived in the Mansion along with “D.A.” (Dear Aunt Elizabeth) and “Granny” (Mary Montagu), generally from July through September; Ethan Hitchcock commuted on the weekends from New York City, where he worked.



Figure 5.6: The French family at the Mansion grounds, July 28, 1943. From left, standing: John French (III), Rhoda and John (II) French, Mary French Rockefeller, Elizabeth (Liz) French Hitchcock, and Bob French; seated: Mary Montagu Billings French and Elizabeth Billings; on ground: Mary French (II), Laura Rockefeller, and Connie Hitchcock. Billings Family Archives. The photograph was taken at the back of the Mansion, with hedges along the Belvedere drive visible in the background.

In keeping with a tradition that by this point was more than fifty years old, life at the Mansion grounds was run by women.<sup>18</sup>

During this time, Mrs. French's other children and grandchildren still often visited. [Figure 5.6] These included John French (II), who married Rhoda Walker in 1931 and had three children. Three years after John and Rhoda's wedding, young Mary French married Laurance Spelman Rockefeller in August 1934 at the Woodstock Congregational Church, with a reception following at the Mansion grounds. After her marriage, Mary Rockefeller remained very attached to Woodstock and came back every year at the time of her wedding anniversary, but otherwise spent most of the summer on Fisher's Island, New

York, among other Rockefeller homes during the years when her children were young.<sup>19</sup>

While the estate was divided in ownership, the components continued to function together. The estate as a whole was still known as Billings Farm, with the Mansion grounds known as "The Hill."<sup>20</sup> This period was a difficult one for the farm operation. Already when Richard Billings inherited it in 1914, the farm operation, centered on the Ottauquechee intervale, was losing money. In the division of the estate, the farm staff retained the burden of maintaining the entire

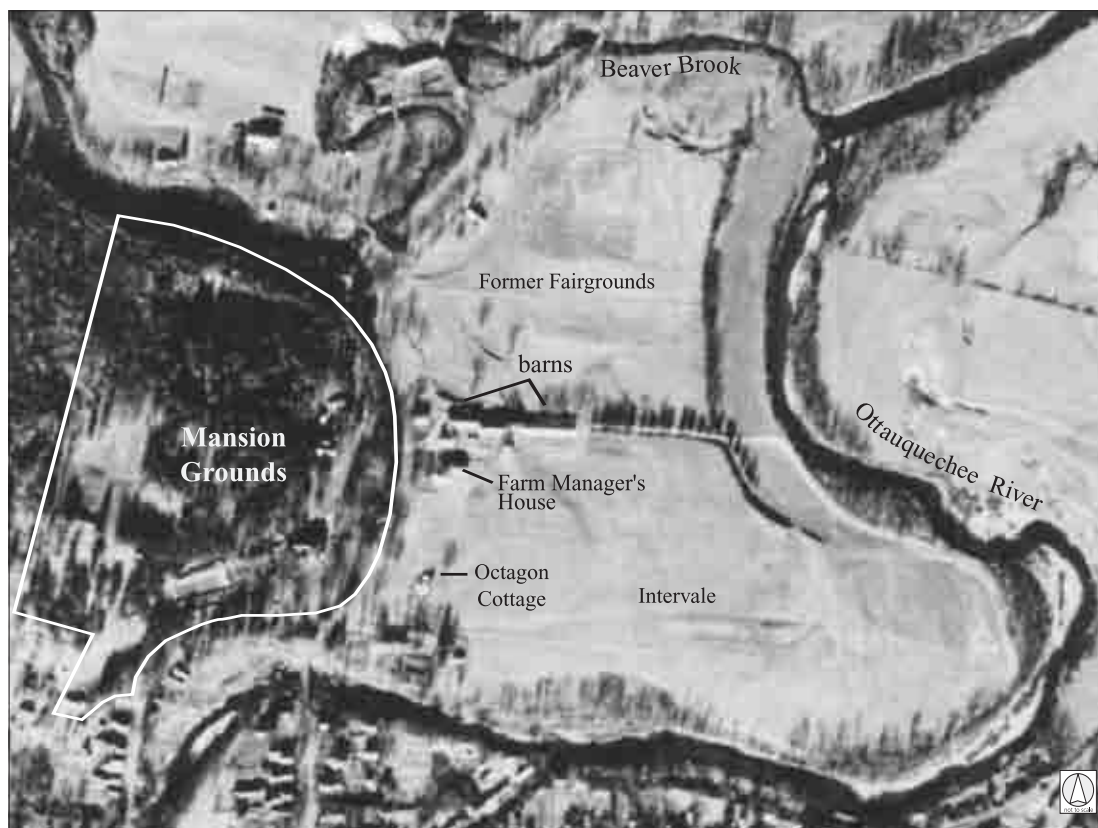
estate, including the Mansion grounds and Mount Tom lands.<sup>21</sup> With the entire financial burden of the farm resting on him, Richard requested that Mary Montagu and Elizabeth cover the costs of the farm staff's work at the Mansion grounds. Yet this measure did not help, and Richard was forced to curtail the farm operations, especially at Hill Top and McKenzie farms. By 1917, the farm operation proved more than Richard could afford, and he sold the main farm to Mary Montagu and Elizabeth, retaining the land north of Barnard Brook, where he was building a Neoclassical-style brick house as his own country place.<sup>22</sup> It is likely that the sisters purchased the farm out of their strong sense of stewardship for the property, perhaps hoping to avoid development of the land that might impact the setting of their father's estate. They had no grand visions for the farm, but rather hoped to maintain it at reduced cost along with the rest of the estate.<sup>23</sup> Thus, by 1917, Mary Montagu and Elizabeth Billings owned the core of their father's estate, encompassing the Mansion grounds, forest, and farm.

Elizabeth and Mary Montagu, along with Mary Montagu's husband John French, quickly hired a new farm manager,

Arthur Snyder, who saw the farm through the widespread rural decline in Vermont following the First World War and the Great Depression—some of its most difficult years. The declining farm economy brought the end of the Windsor County Fair in 1932, which allowed Mary Montagu and Elizabeth to purchase the fifty-acre fairgrounds that adjoined the main farm, property that their father had once tried to acquire. Despite this acquisition, the farm operation was still facing difficult times, and in 1936 the dairy herd was sold off, but the intervale meadow still produced hay and other crops.<sup>24</sup> [Figure 5.7] Forestry operations faced a parallel decline, although harvesting of timber and firewood, centered at the Woodshed on the Mansion grounds, remained a steady activity that filled in during slow times on the farm. In 1917, a

plantation of red pine was made on the old McKenzie farm west of the Pogue, but apparently, following this, few new plantations of any significant size were made until the 1930s. The fortunes of the farm and forest began to change during the Second World War when Arthur Snyder retired in 1943 following twenty-six years of management. Mary Montagu and Elizabeth took the opportunity to rebuild the farm as a commercial dairy. They hired Harold Corkum, who resurrected the dairy operation and restocked the farm's Jersey herd. A professional farm advisory firm was hired to guide the operation and, in 1948, an official reopening ceremony was held.<sup>25</sup> By the early 1950s, with new barns and modern milk-processing works, the farm was meeting with some success, and new forest plantations were also begun.<sup>26</sup> Although the Mansion grounds declined considerably following Elizabeth's death in 1944, Mrs. French took steps to improve the landscape later in the decade, paralleling improvements at the farm and forest.

Figure 5.7: Aerial view of Billings Farm (open ground inside river bend) and the Mansion grounds, November 1939. Billings Family Archives.





### THE MANSION GROUNDS: MAINTENANCE, 1914-1954

The transition of the Mansion grounds in 1914 to ownership under Mary Montagu Billings French and Elizabeth Billings came about with probably little perceptible change to the landscape or its use. Both women had been in effect managing the grounds since Laura's marriage in 1901, with the help after 1907 of Mary Montagu's husband, John French. After 1914, however, they no longer needed the concurrence of either their mother or siblings; nor did they need the approval of the estate trustees, whose oversight of the Woodstock estate ceased upon division.

In the decade following Julia's death, Elizabeth apparently continued her lead role in maintenance and operation of the Mansion grounds, including her hillside wild gardens, the Terrace Gardens, and the Hothouses. At the time, Mary Montagu was busy raising her three children, who in 1914 were between the ages of three and five. Elizabeth had the help of estate gardeners and the farm staff, as well as the oversight of the farm manager. In later years, Mary Montagu would actively help Elizabeth with maintenance of the grounds, taking on tasks such as directing staff on which trees required trimming and when the drive gutters needed to be cleaned.<sup>27</sup>

### Initial Changes and Additions

Through the 1920s, the formal showpiece of the Mansion grounds remained the neoclassical Terrace Gardens with their extensive plantings of flowering perennials and clipped evergreen hedges. Along the main walk of the Long Terrace, the arborvitae were still clipped as a procession of tall cylinders interspersed with roses, and along the lower walk, the border was planted with a wide array of flowering perennials and annuals, probably according to Ellen Shipman's 1912 plan. To the north of the Long Terrace was a high hemlock hedge, which separated the gardens from the Hothouses. [Figure 5.8, 5.9]

The Mansion remained surrounded by deciduous shrubs that had been planted according to the design of Martha Brookes Brown at the turn of the century; the perimeter hemlock hedge was kept as a neatly trimmed border around the Mansion lawn and main entrance drive. [Figure 5.10] The elm trees on the Mansion lawn, as well as those that lined the approach on Elm Street, were still one of the most prominent features of the landscape, along with the

Figure 5.8: The Long Terrace with its clipped hedges, view east from lower walk toward the Flower Garden, c.1919. Billings Family Archives. The roof of the Octagon (conservatory) is visible above the tall hedge.





Figure 5.9: The Long Terrace, view east showing clipped hedges, cross—axis walk, and herbaceous border along lower walk, c.1920. Billings Family Archives. The identity of the people in the photograph is not known.

views across the Ottawaquechee intervale. The importance of these features was reflected in a newspaper series from c.1920, entitled “Weekend Journeys to the Homes of Great Vermonters:”

*Majestic elm trees are the most conspicuous feature of the extensive grounds surrounding the Billings home in Woodstock. So it seems appropriate that the village approach to it should be by way of Elm Street. The house stands on a hillside at the foot of the street overlooking the valley of the Ottawaquechee.*<sup>28</sup>

Initially, Mary Montagu and Elizabeth made few changes; however, they did apparently take advantage of their new found authority in the treatment of the Victorian buildings. In fall 1915, a year and a half after Julia’s death, Elizabeth decided to change the exterior color of the Mansion, which had been last repainted in its original earth tones in

1905. Elizabeth had the entire house changed to a monochrome shade of gray, perhaps to quiet the out-of-fashion Victorian details and allow the house to fade into the landscape.<sup>29</sup> Elizabeth and Mary Montagu undertook no further exterior renovations to the building, probably on account of their sentimental attachment, and also lack of funds for what would have been a very costly renovation, given the Mansion’s marked contrast with architectural styles then in fashion. Around the same

time that Elizabeth had the Mansion repainted, similar changes were also undertaken to the other two Victorian buildings on the grounds—the Belvedere and the Laundry. The Belvedere was painted in monochrome white to match the Hothouses, except for the window sashes and doors, which were left a dark color. The Laundry was also painted a monochrome color, most likely gray to match the Mansion, but its renovations went a bit further. In order to further simplify the building and probably to make installation of a new roof easier, the two tall hipped roofs and dormers that ornamented the front were removed at the level of the main roof. The shutters and all of the iron cresting were also removed.<sup>30</sup> [Figure 5.11]

Instead of spending a fortune on updating the Mansion, Mary Montagu and Elizabeth decided on building a new residence within the Mansion grounds, something that would be smaller, up-to-date stylistically, and within the naturalistic landscape of the hill. In addition, one of Mary Montagu’s favorite retreats—the stone Golf House on the family’s links north of Barnard Brook—had fallen in the division of the estate to her brother Richard, and perhaps she wished to have a similar rustic building to replace it.

In 1916, she moved ahead with construction of the new retreat, and commissioned Harold Van Buren Magonigle of New York City and Greenwich, Connecticut. Magonigle, who had designed the Frenches' suburban house in Greenwich a few years before, was an architect and sculptor by training, and became best known for designing the National Maine Monument at the entrance to Central Park.<sup>31</sup>

The new building, which the family called the “Bungalow,” was sited on the north edge of the hill in a plantation of white pine, off the Wood Drive, which wound up the hill from the Belvedere through the Fernery and to the Garden. In preparation for the building, Elizabeth marked the trees that had to be removed on the site.<sup>32</sup> Completed by September 1917, the Bungalow was a rustic one-story Craftsman-style structure



**Figure 5.10:** View from the main entrance drive toward the Mansion illustrating clipped hedges, Norway spruce, and mature elms, c.1919. Billings Family Archives.

**Figure 5.11:** The front of the Laundry in its later years following removal of peaked roofs and other ornamental features, c.1945. Billings Family Archives. Note shrubs along the front, probably remnants of the 1902 Martha Brown landscape design.



with low-sloping wood-shingled hip roof and monitor, casement windows, and naturally finished cedar trim and clapboard siding. [Figure 5.12] The front side of the building featured a full-width front porch that faced north with vistas down the hill and across the valley. Trees were removed to open these vistas, a task that was repeated in the ensuing years.<sup>33</sup> In keeping with the rustic design of the building, the

grounds surrounding the Bungalow were left in their natural condition, although a rough perimeter lawn was established.

While they were planning the Bungalow, Mary Montagu and Elizabeth were also considering changes to the Hothouses, which by this time they were calling simply “the greenhouses.” Unlike the Mansion and Laundry, the design of the greenhouses was fairly up-to-date (except for the Belvedere), but it was perhaps more the function and maintenance of the buildings that caused some



Figure 5.12: View of the back and east side of the Bungalow within its wooded setting, photographed about 25 years after it was built in 1917. Billings Family Archives.

initial concern. In October 1915, Elizabeth had Lord & Burnham come to replace the ground glass of the Tropical House with clear glass.<sup>34</sup> Ground glass would have shielded tropical plants from the harsh rays of the sun, and its removal suggests that perhaps Elizabeth gave up on her parent's Victorian interest in tropical plants. With the family's predominant summer use of the Mansion grounds, the Hothouses were probably not a favorite place to spend hot summer days. While they still would have been needed for starting plants for the gardens and growing fruits such as grapes and peaches, their recreational use may have been quite limited by this time. Neither Mary Montagu nor Elizabeth recorded in their diaries frequent visits to the greenhouses, as Frederick and Julia once had.

Without the oversight and resources of their father's estate, Mary Montagu and Elizabeth were also realizing that the greenhouses were a financial burden, and one that was difficult to justify given their seasonal use of the grounds. The year after they inherited the property, they had to spend \$1,150 to paint and reglaze the buildings.<sup>35</sup> In August 1916, Elizabeth wrote in her diary: "Bring Dreers [family

friends and owners of a seed company in Philadelphia] up to greenhouse to talk w. W. [Wilson, the gardener] about keeping or tearing down."<sup>36</sup> The greenhouse structures, which had been rebuilt in iron under Laura's oversight, were then only a little over a dozen years old. Despite Elizabeth's inclination, however, Laura and Mary Montagu decided that the greenhouses should be maintained. Five years later, John French was soliciting bids for modernization of the greenhouse heating system. In October 1921, a representative from Lord &

Burnham came up to inspect the steam system, and reported that there were changed conditions since the greenhouses had been rebuilt, with cool crops being grown in houses originally designed for high temperatures and vice versa. The representative noted that in addition to the conservatory (Octagon), there was still the Grapery (where peaches were also grown), but the Rosary and Tropical House had been converted to growing other plants.<sup>37</sup>

On the hillside, Elizabeth continued to tend to her wild gardens, but eventually cut back on their extent. Following her mother's death, she apparently ceased her grass garden and may not have done much more with her arboretum, but continued to maintain a mushroom garden and the Fernery, her prize garden.<sup>38</sup> By the early 1920s, however, the old oaks that shaded the Fernery were starting to decline, and some were removed in the spring of 1922.<sup>39</sup> Despite this, Elizabeth continued to add new plants to the Fernery, each of which was carefully labeled with metal markers. The botanist Elsie Kittredge, who was assisting Elizabeth in cataloguing the wild plants of Woodstock, also helped with the Fernery. In August 1928, Ms. Kittredge verified that a fern found on Mount Tom and transplanted to the Fernery for display was indeed a newly discovered variety, which she named "Miss Billings fern," *Adiantum pedatum forma Billingsae*, in Elizabeth's honor.<sup>40</sup>

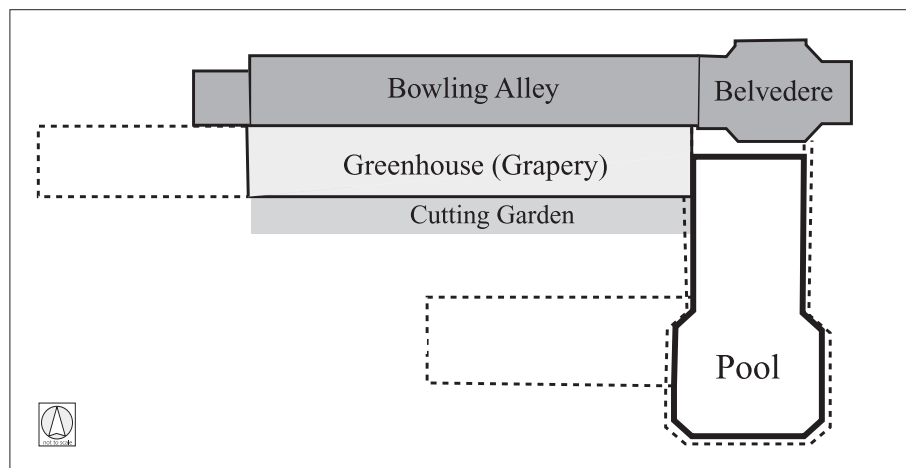


Figure 5.13: Plan of the Belvedere, Bowling Alley, and Greenhouse following removal of the Octagon, Rosary, and Tropical House in 1930, and the west end of the Grapery in 1940. SUNY ESF.

### A Faded Landscape

Through the 1920s, Mary Montagu and Elizabeth apparently had sufficient funds to maintain the Mansion grounds according to the high standards their parents had held for decades before. Beginning in the 1930s, however, their stewardship continued but with limited means; they began to gradually simplify the landscape, as they were doing at the farm. These changes coincided with the Great Depression and the ensuing Second World War, as well as the family's changing perception of the Mansion grounds. The marriage of the Frenches' daughter Mary to Laurance Rockefeller in August of 1934—when four hundred guests were invited to a reception on the Mansion grounds following the ceremony at the Congregational Church on Elm Street—probably witnessed one of the last years during this period in which the Mansion grounds were in their glory.<sup>41</sup>

Four years before the Rockefellers' wedding, Mary Montagu and Elizabeth began to take down the greenhouses. The crash of the stock market in the fall of 1929 may have given incentive to Elizabeth's idea from nearly thirteen years earlier to tear them down. She and Mary Montagu must have agreed that the greenhouses, which were probably only partly used by this time and in

need of an expensive new paint job, were simply too costly to maintain. The family also had in mind a better use for the site. In June 1930, Mary Montagu and John French met with Mr. Dawson, a builder from Hanover, New Hampshire, to discuss construction of a swimming pool on the site of the greenhouses. By this time, the hillside swimming pool adjacent to the Lily Pond had probably become shaded by the surrounding trees, and the leaves that constantly collected in it were a problem.<sup>42</sup> The site of the Hothouses provided a larger and far sunnier location

Figure 5.14: The new swimming pool built in the foundations of the Hothouses, showing the south wall of the Belvedere, formerly within the Tropical House, c.1937. Billings Family Archives. The remaining greenhouse, the former Grapery, is at the left.



where leaves would not collect, and the foundations provided an economical structure in which to build a new pool. The decision to replace the greenhouses with a pool was apparently swift because, the next month—July 1930—demolition began on all of them, except for the Grapery, the half-span greenhouse that adjoined the Bowling Alley.<sup>43</sup> [Figure 5.13] The old hillside swimming pool was subsequently filled or capped with concrete.

Construction of the new swimming pool began in August 1930 and was largely completed by

May 1931. John French contracted with the firm of Hegeman-Harris Company, of 105 Devonshire Street, Boston, for the construction. The completed pool was a simple structure without embellishment of any kind. It was built within the foundations of the Octagon and Tropical House, which were parged with concrete to hold water; the foundation of the Rosary was completely removed and the site was seeded as lawn. The pool operated by means of a continuous flush system: water flowed into the pool from a one-inch supply pipe extending downhill from the Reservoir, and then emptied through scum gutters around the perimeter of the pool into drains leading down to the Ottawaquechee River.<sup>44</sup> Minimal changes were made to the surrounding landscape, apart from the addition of a perimeter concrete walk and a pipe-and-mesh fence. A diving board was installed against the Belvedere, below the steel platform and staircase that originally led from the interior of the Tropical House to the Grapery. [Figure 5.14] The Grapery—thereafter referred to simply as the “greenhouse,” was maintained to start annuals and other plants for the gardens.

Following removal of the greenhouses and construction of the swimming pool, the Mansion grounds continued to be



**Figure 5.15:** View from the upper walk on the Long Terrace east into the Flower Garden, July 16, 1938. Billings Family Archives. The arborvitae and hemlock hedges had become quite large by this time.

maintained, but with few improvements. Since Julia Billings’s death, there had apparently been no head gardener dedicated to the care of the landscape, but certain farm and estate staff were assigned to its upkeep. In 1917, Thomas Wilson was identified as taking care of the Mansion grounds, and in the 1920s, Robert C. Eaton was employed in the greenhouses. By the early 1930s, two staff were employed in the upkeep of the grounds: Robert E. Woodbury and Clinton H. Howland. From c.1935 to 1949, Woodbury shared responsibility for the care of the Mansion grounds with Murray Maynes.

Through the 1930s, the hedges were kept neatly clipped (although they were becoming overgrown), the lawns were mown, and the flowerbeds in the Terrace Gardens were well tended. [Figure 5.15] The Flower Garden remained one of the joys of the grounds, as evidenced by Mary Montagu’s diary entry of August 9, 1931: “A rainy morning. It lets up a little, and I went to the garden to get phlox for church. The garden a mass of color and form of the varieties very lovely.”<sup>45</sup> Mary Montagu kept the Mansion

stocked with cut flower displays from the Flower Garden and also from a cutting garden that had been established along the side of the greenhouse (the old Grapery), probably following the removal of the other greenhouses.<sup>46</sup> The Garden on the hill was also maintained, although its size and the varieties of flowers and vegetables that were grown in it were probably reduced from what once had been. Elizabeth apparently gave up on her mushroom garden, but continued to tend to her hillside Fernery.<sup>47</sup> The Fernery was the subject of a tour in July of 1940, given by Elsie Kittredge for the Hartland Nature Club, which met in the Bungalow.<sup>48</sup>

Despite continued maintenance, signs of physical decline on the Mansion grounds were evident by the late 1930s, paralleling the problems on the farm. Several of the graceful elms and maples that shaded the Mansion lawn were gradually removed due to age-related decline, and to natural disasters such as the hurricane of September 1938, which claimed several large specimens.<sup>49</sup> The year before the hurricane, a photograph [see Figure 5.14] of the family swimming in the new pool showed peeling paint on the Belvedere, reflecting a level of maintenance that would not have been tolerated during Frederick and Julia Billings's day.<sup>50</sup> By this time, the greenhouse was no longer being heated during the winter, and it still proved more space than was needed.<sup>51</sup> In June 1940, Mary Montagu discussed with the farm manager, Arthur Snyder, her idea of tearing down the west end of the greenhouse (a fifty-foot section that extended beyond the Bowling Alley) in order to reduce maintenance. [See Figure 5.15] The remaining section, she noted, "would seem to have enough space to store plants & start vegetables."<sup>52</sup> The west end of the greenhouse was demolished soon after this time.

By the 1940s, family dynamics were bringing a new set of changes to the Mansion grounds with the death of Elizabeth Billings in 1944 and Mary Montagu's increasingly frail health. There was, however, a new generation on the grounds: Liz and Ethan Hitchcock's two daughters: Connie, then aged four, and Polly, aged one. Because the children spent their summers on the Mansion grounds, new recreational features appeared to join the pool and

tennis court. A steel-pipe swing set was installed at the back of the Mansion (probably near the same spot that Frederick Billings had a playground), and a rope swing was hung from one of the old maples near the boulder by the Summerhouses. Also at the rear of the Mansion between the big elm and the Belvedere drive was an informal Croquet Ground.<sup>53</sup> The Mansion grounds also provided lots of places where the children could make their own fun. Near the Summerhouses, the boulder, which was strung with wires on which vines once grew, was good for climbing. Nearby, the rock outcropping known as "Fairy Hill" formed a thicket of ferns and shrubs with an opening in the middle that was a favorite place to play. [Figure 5.16] A similar spot was the hedged-in triangular island at the head of the entrance drive, where the children played fort. In the tall Norway spruces between the Stable and the Mansion, Connie and Polly built tree houses, high up on the trunks with their easily climbable branches.<sup>54</sup> As the children grew up, they also kept a pony on the Mansion grounds. In the early 1950s, "Flicka" stayed in the Stable and was pastured in a corral, which was added in the swale

**Figure 5.16: Connie and Polly Hitchcock and Larry Rockefeller (son of Laurance and Mary) playing on "Fairy Hill," c.1949. Courtesy Polly Hitchcock Bigham, Evansville, Indiana.**



and which extended from the Stable to the tennis court. The corral was enclosed by a three-rail plank fence.<sup>55</sup> [Figure 5.17]

Following Elizabeth's death, her wild gardens, including the Fernery and Lily Pond water garden, fell into decline. These gardens had required intensive maintenance, something Mary Montagu could not attend to by this time—she was no longer even able to walk up the hill. The only maintenance that was continued on the hillside was mowing the Wood Drive that ran up to the Bungalow. All the built features of the Fernery, including the log steps and metal plant markers, remained in place, but became overgrown. The Lily Pond was still filled with water, but the water lilies gradually died out as the area became increasingly shaded from the surrounding trees.<sup>56</sup>

Elizabeth's death also coincided with the onset of Dutch elm disease in Woodstock. A fatal fungal infection transmitted by the elm bark beetle, Dutch elm disease was discovered in Holland in 1919, and was first detected in the United States in Ohio in the summer of 1930. Along the East Coast, the disease spread rapidly from New York City, where it had been an undetected infestation for several years, along natural corridors such as the Connecticut River Valley.<sup>57</sup> In September 1949, the Village of Woodstock took down one of the elms along Elm Street in front of the Mansion that had contracted the disease, and soon after this, the big elm at the back of the Mansion was also struck and taken down. Despite the virulence of the disease, it took many years before all the elms—which at the time still included five large specimens on the Mansion lawn—were lost.<sup>58</sup>

The Terrace Gardens also declined following Elizabeth's death. By the late 1940s, the perimeter clipped hedges had become overgrown, constricting the entrance into the garden, and the Italian fountain was covered in slime. The



Figure 5.17: The Stable and "Flicka's fence," built c.1950, photographed in 1967. Assessment Records, Town of Woodstock.

Figure 5.18: The big elm and profuse shrubbery at the rear and south sides of the Mansion, view northeast along walk from Summerhouses, 1947. Billings Family Archives. The tree was removed soon after this photograph was taken.







Figure 5.19: Women of the extended Billings family posed in antique clothing on the front steps of the Mansion, 1947. Courtesy Jane McDill Smith, Woodstock, Vermont. Left to right, standing: Mary French Rockefeller, Rhoda French, Elizabeth French Hitchcock; seated in chair: Mary M. B. French; seated on step: Julia Lee McDill and Jane Pillow Rightor Lee.

clipped hedges along the Long Terrace were equally overgrown and leaning over, probably from the weight of winter snows, and the paint on the Platt benches was peeling. Nonetheless, Mary Montagu still had the Flower Garden planted every year.<sup>59</sup> The level of maintenance in the Terrace Gardens reflected the overall maintenance of the grounds: things were kept up, but just barely. Peeling paint and dust was characteristic of all the buildings. To the Hitchcock children, the Mansion seemed spooky

with its dark interiors and the old curtains over the windows. The Stable contained tack from Frederick Billings's day and the Laundry retained its ancient machinery and drying racks, which were still used. The profuse shrubbery around the Mansion created a natural and overgrown feeling to the landscape. [Figure 5.18] Except for the Flower Garden, there was little persistent color in the landscape; the only flowers directly around the Mansion were morning glory vines—Mary Montagu's "heavenly blues," which she still trained up the piazza, as she had for decades—intermingled with Virginia creeper that turned color in the fall and roses lining the circle by the porte cochere.<sup>60</sup> Where the need arose, the landscape was simply adapted without formal change, such as the addition of Flicka's pasture or Mary Montagu's parking spot off the circle, which she called her "cubby hole" because it was enclosed by shrubs.<sup>61</sup>

Yet the slightly shabby appearance of the Mansion grounds appealed to the family, who felt that the Mansion was part of a working farm and therefore did not need to look fancy; it was a relaxed place, although traditions such as dressing for dinner were still maintained.<sup>62</sup> Its condition also had romantic appeal. During an era when

Figure 5.20: The Gardener's Cottage at 3 North Street, west side, c.1945. Billings Family Archives. The Norway spruce in the background are part of the perimeter plantations, established in the 1870s.



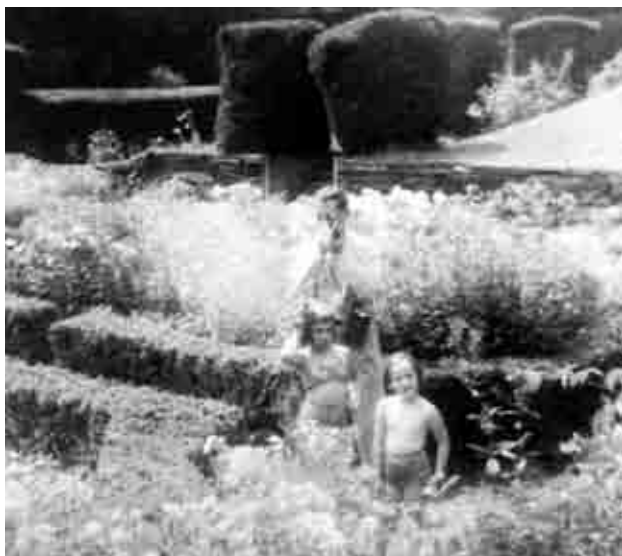


Figure 5.21: View southwest across the Flower Garden illustrating condition in 1950, one year after head gardener Carl Bergstrom was hired. Courtesy Polly Hitchcock Bigham, Evansville, Indiana. Pictured is Ethan Hitchcock with daughters Connie and Polly.

Modernism—with its clean lines, efficiency, and technology—was gaining a stronghold in American culture, the Mansion grounds provided an escape. The family, both the adults and the children, dressed up for parties on the grounds in Victorian and Edwardian garb, perhaps to evoke the sense of antiquity in their time-worn surroundings. At one such party in 1947, the women of the family gathered around Mary Montagu for a photograph. They posed on the front steps of the piazza—with its badly peeling paint and draping vines—all dressed in white flowing gowns typical of the turn of the century. [Figure 5.19].<sup>63</sup>

Perhaps due to the deteriorating condition of the Mansion grounds by the late 1940s, Mary Montagu decided to invest in improving its maintenance, paralleling improvements she was overseeing at the farm under the direction of farm manager Harold Corkum. In 1949, she hired Carl Bergstrom, a professional horti-

culturist, as head gardener for the Mansion grounds, a position that had apparently not been filled for many years. Carl Bergstrom held a degree in horticulture from the Stockbridge School of Horticulture at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and, at the time he was hired, was working for a commercial flower grower in Clinton, Massachusetts and living with his wife Mimi in Worcester. The Bergstroms moved into the Gardener's Cottage at 3 North Street, which had been acquired by Frederick Billings in 1872.<sup>64</sup> [Figure 5.20]

When Carl and Mimi Bergstrom arrived in Woodstock, they found the Mansion grounds “a mess.”<sup>65</sup> Carl soon began work on reviving the Flower Garden and the formal grounds around the Mansion. During his first full season, Carl planted the beds in the Flower Garden as well as at least a portion of the long border on the Long Terrace. He clipped the hedges, but some were so overgrown and distorted there was little he could do without a major replanting program. [Figure 5.21]

Improvement of the Fernery and other hillside gardens was too big a task, and they remained overgrown and largely unmaintained for years after Carl Bergstrom's

Figure 5.22: The Garden Shed, view of south side facing the Garden road, c.1945. Billings Family Archives.





Figure 5.23: The Woodshed with the smaller saw shed in the foreground, view west across the Woodshed yard, c.1945. The mountain road is to the left. Billings Family Archives.

arrival. He did maintain the Garden, but not to the extent nor with the great variety of vegetables it had supported during Frederick and Julia's time. Mary Montagu had the entire west half of the Garden kept in "people corn," while other parts were devoted to vegetables such as onions; there was also a raspberry patch and flowering plants including heather.<sup>66</sup> The Garden Shed, built in c.1870, still stood at the southwest corner of the Garden, although by the late 1940s, its original open front bays had been enclosed and the cross gable removed.<sup>67</sup> [Figure 5.22] To the north of the Garden, the Woodshed, built in 1876, and the adjoining saw shed remained, along with the Reservoir, which had been last remodeled in 1919. [Figures 5.23, 5.24]

#### **DIVISION OF MARY MONTAGU BILLINGS FRENCH'S ESTATE, 1951-1954**

On June 14, 1951 at the beginning of her eighty-second year at the Mansion grounds, Mary Montagu Billings French died. She had prepared a will for her 782-acre Woodstock estate that included interest she had inherited from Elizabeth. Elizabeth's will, which had been settled in 1948, divided her half-interest in the estate five ways among

Mary Montagu, the Town of Woodstock, and Mary Montagu's three children: John French (II), Liz French Hitchcock, and Mary French Rockefeller. As executed on July 5, 1951, Mary Montagu in turn divided her interest in the estate to her three children.<sup>68</sup> Thus, by this date the French children each held one-third interest in the estate, excepting the interest held by the Town through Elizabeth's will.

Because Mary Montagu's will did not specify how the Woodstock estate should be divided, the fate of the

Mansion grounds remained uncertain. Through the next four summers, the family worked out the division while the Hitchcocks continued their seasonal life at the Mansion grounds. Prior to the division, the three French children agreed to sell off several parcels of land in the 782-acre estate, all except one of which were outside of the Mansion grounds. The largest of the parcels encompassed 136 acres on the North and South Peaks of Mount Tom, which the family gave to the Town of Woodstock for use as a public park in memory of their mother, subsequently known as Billings Park.<sup>69</sup> This conveyance was probably used in part to satisfy the interest given to the Town through the will of Elizabeth Billings.

Figure 5.24: The Reservoir, view southwest, c.1945. Billings Family Archives.



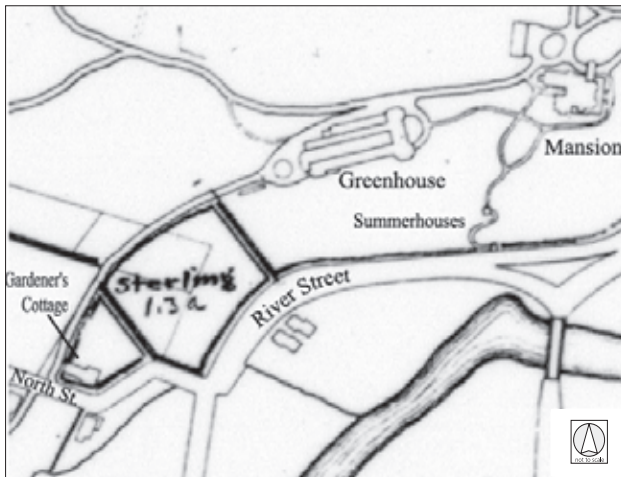


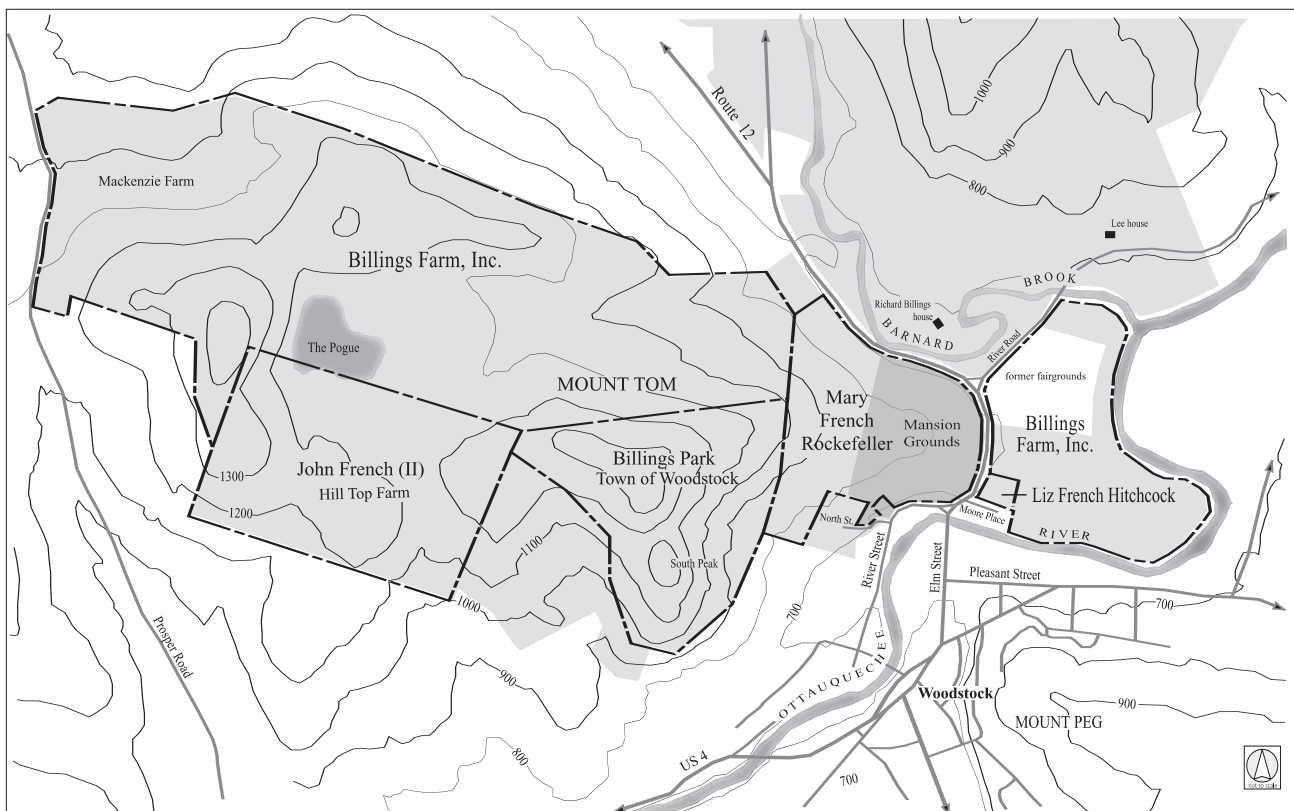
Figure 5.25: Detail of 1901 Cairns survey of the Billings Estate amended around 1951 to indicate subdivision of property to Richard Sterling. Billings Family Archives, annotated by SUNY ESF.

The one parcel that the family sold off within the Mansion grounds was located at the corner of North and River Streets. Farm manager Harold Corkum approached the three French children about selling a parcel of land to Richard Sterling, a pharmacist in the village, so that he

could build a house for his young family. At the time, Richard and his wife Mary had four young children and had been looking for a house in Woodstock to no avail. In November 1951, the French children agreed to sell Sterling a one-and-a-third-acre parcel at the southwest corner of the Mansion grounds facing River Street, adjoining the Gardener's Cottage. [Figure 5.25] The property contained open ground with mature spruce and sugar maple lining River Street above the perimeter stone wall. In the middle of this lot, the Sterlings had a one-and-a-half-story thirty-six by thirty-foot prefabricated Cape Cod-style house built in 1958 by Northern Homes.<sup>70</sup> In order to build the house, some trees and a portion of the stone wall were removed and the lot was regraded.

While the French family was settling the contract to sell property to the Richard Sterling, they were also discussing

Figure 5.26: Billings Estate showing approximate boundaries following division of Mary Montagu Billings French's estate, c.1954. SUNY ESF, based on Cairns survey of 1901 annotated to c.1954, Billings Family Archives. The former extent of the Billings Estate in c.1906 is shown in light gray, the Mansion grounds in dark gray.



the fate of the rest of the estate, including the Mansion grounds. There was some talk of selling to an order of nuns, but by the summer of 1952, a plan was devised to convey seventy-eight acres of land to Mary French Rockefeller for use as a summer home.<sup>71</sup> This land included thirty-five acres encompassing the Mansion grounds within the village limits and an additional forty-three-and-a-half acres outside the village extending west up Mount Tom. [Figure 5.26] On July 19, 1952, John French (II) conveyed his one-third interest in these seventy-eight acres to Mary Rockefeller for one dollar. Liz Hitchcock, however, did not finalize the transfer of her one-third interest until March 20, 1954, nearly two years later.<sup>72</sup> Her sale of interest, also for one dollar, gave Mary French Rockefeller full ownership of the Mansion grounds and adjoining forested land.

In the final division of the estate, John French (II) received 122 acres at Hill Top farm, where he built a new house. Liz Hitchcock received a small lot across from the Mansion grounds containing the Octagon Cottage, purportedly the original second Marsh house. For the remainder of the estate, which amounted to over five hundred acres, the family established a private corporation titled Billings Farm, Inc., in 1954. This corporation, the stock of which was held in common by the heirs, held title to the farmland and farm buildings on the Ottauquechee River intervale, as well as the remaining forest lands on Mount Tom. Liz Hitchcock served as president, Mary French Rockefeller as vice president, and John French (II) as treasurer. The incorporation was undertaken, according to John French, to “insure continuity in its operations and to facilitate possible expansion.”<sup>73</sup>

## LANDSCAPE SUMMARY

In the spring of 1954, Mary French Rockefeller became the third generation of the Billings family to own the Mansion grounds, continuing the long pattern of ownership and stewardship by Billings women. Although she had spent all her childhood summers on the Mansion grounds and had visited there often since her marriage in 1934 to Laurance S. Rockefeller, it had not been her home for many years. It was no longer the model country place that it had been

during her grandparents’ day, or even during her early childhood. Although her aunts had preserved the farm and forest as well as the Mansion grounds through difficult times, they had been unable to keep up the improvements that had earlier characterized the landscape. Aside from the addition of the Bungalow in 1917 and the new swimming pool in 1931, the Mansion grounds had seen little improvement over the previous three decades, and were in need of substantial investment, despite the work head gardener Carl Bergstrom had put into the landscape beginning in 1949. The Mansion grounds were faded, but Mary Rockefeller was very attached to the property, and she and Laurance probably envisioned much potential in its mature trees, expansive views, gardens, and Victorian architecture. With their financial resources, the Rockefellers had the ability to rehabilitate the Mansion grounds in a manner that would return the landscape to the model of rural improvement that it once had been, continuing the long Billings family tradition of stewardship for the land and its place in Woodstock.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Norman T. Newton, *Design on the Land* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), 444.

<sup>2</sup> Christopher McGrory Klyza and Stephen C. Trombulak, *The Story of Vermont* (Hanover: Middlebury College Press, 1999), 109.

<sup>3</sup> The Vermont Commission on Country Life, ed., *Rural Vermont: A Program for the Future* (Burlington: Free Press Printing, 1931), 120.

<sup>4</sup> Peter S. Jennison, *The History of Woodstock Vermont 1890-1983* (Woodstock: Published for the Woodstock Foundation by the Countryman Press, 1985), 273.

<sup>5</sup> Vermont Agency of Transportation, Records for Route 12, State Administration Building, Montpelier.

<sup>6</sup> Jennison, 243-44.

<sup>7</sup> Workers of the Federal Writers’ Project of the Works Progress Administration for the State of Vermont, *American Guide Series: Vermont* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1937), 151-52.

<sup>8</sup> Polly Hitchcock Bigham (granddaughter of Mary Montagu) interview by John Auwaerter, 22 May 2001, Woodstock.

<sup>9</sup> Everett V. Perkins, letter to the editor of the *Vermont Standard*, 17 October 1947, clipping in Mary M. B. French's diary, Billings Family Archives [hereafter, "BFA"].

<sup>10</sup> Will of Frederick Billings, 10 June 1890, clause 48, BFA.

<sup>11</sup> Richard also received a small portion of the McKenzie Farm at the western end of the estate.

<sup>12</sup> David Donath, "Legacy of Stewardship" (Introductory exhibit narrative, Billings Farm & Museum, August 7, 1998), 15; Esther M. Swift, conversation with John Auwaerter, 24 July 2001, telephone.

<sup>13</sup> Janet Houghton, "Buildings and Properties in Other Places: Miscellaneous Notes," Mac database, July 2001, Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park library [hereafter, "MABI"].

<sup>14</sup> Jane McDill Smith (granddaughter of Laura Billings Lee), interview by John Auwaerter, 22 March 2001, telephone; calling card in Mary Montagu Billings French diary [hereafter, "MMBF diary"], 1940.

<sup>15</sup> Mary M. Billings French, *Thoughts and Meditations from the Notebook of Mary M. Billings French*, ed. Anna Rice (Mary F. Rockefeller, 1955), v.

<sup>16</sup> Sarah B. Laughlin and Nancy L. Martin, "The Billings-Kittredge Herbarium Collection," *Vermont Natural History Annual Magazine*, 1981, 1-3. The Herbarium is now part of the Billings Family Archives.

<sup>17</sup> Janet Houghton, Billings family tree (unpublished paper), MABI.

<sup>18</sup> Connie Hitchcock, interview by John Auwaerter, 27 June 2001, Woodstock; Polly Hitchcock Bigham 2001.

<sup>19</sup> Polly Hitchcock Bigham, 2001.

<sup>20</sup> Calling card in MMBF diary, 1940.

<sup>21</sup> In December 1914, Richard wrote his sister Mary Montagu: "Now I am finding Woodstock even worse than I thought it was. . . Last year for instance the farm actually bought more farm products than it produced." Richard Billings to Mary Montagu Billings French, quoted in Sarah Wilcke et al., "Cultural Landscape Report for the Forest at Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park" (National Park Service and the University of Vermont, 2000), 76.

<sup>22</sup> Esther M. Swift, conversation with John Auwaerter, 24 July 2001, telephone; the Richard Billings house is presently the offices of the Woodstock Foundation.

<sup>23</sup> It was the desire of Elizabeth and Mary Montagu to "keep the place up, including the nine or ten miles of mountain drives, and the residence, greenhouses, etc., without doing much farming. . . . We do not wish . . . to engage in very extensive farming—any more than is required—as this has proved a very expensive proposition in the past." John French to Arthur Snyder (farm manager), 14 March 1917, Billings Farm & Museum Library [hereafter 'BFM'].

<sup>24</sup> Wilcke, 77; Donath, 16.

<sup>25</sup> Jennison, 32.

<sup>26</sup> Donath, 16, Forest CLR, 75.

<sup>27</sup> For example: "On my [Mary's] return E. B. [Elizabeth] and I go up through the summer houses and find Woodbury and Howland [groundskeepers]—we tell them of various trimming we think should be done as well as the clearing the gutters of leaves." MMBF diary, 20 October 1943.

<sup>28</sup> Newspaper clipping, "Weekend Journeys to the Homes of Great Vermonters," source unknown, A29, BFA.

<sup>29</sup> Elizabeth Billings diary, [hereafter, "EzB diary"], 11 October 1915, BFA.

<sup>30</sup> Panorama of Mansion grounds showing earth-tone color on Belvedere alongside new Hothouses, c.1905, A29, BFA; light-painted Belvedere and pool, c.1937, Mansion Guest Book, MABI; Photograph of Laundry, 14 September 1900, Album 52, BFA; Photograph of Laundry, c.1951, Album 39, BFA.

<sup>31</sup> Janet Houghton, "Bungalow: History of Construction and Alteration" (unpublished paper, January 1995), MABI building files.

<sup>32</sup> EzB diary, 11 September 1916.

<sup>33</sup> MMBF diary, 2 June 1930.

<sup>34</sup> Lord & Burnham to Miss Elizabeth Billings, bill dated 28 October 1915, A29, BFA.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> EzB diary, 18 August 1916.

<sup>37</sup> Lord & Burnham (T. E. King) to Mr. John French, 22 October 1921, A29, BFA. Lord & Burnham's estimate for revamping the heating system amounted to \$2,282. No record remains of whether this work was undertaken.

<sup>38</sup> Elizabeth last mentions the arboretum in her diary entry of 9 September 1913; her grasses, on 13 September 1910.

- <sup>39</sup> “Walk up on hill. Fernery changed without oaks.” EzB diary, 28 May 1922. There may have also been chestnut trees in this grove, which would have been killed off by this time from a widespread chestnut blight.
- <sup>40</sup> Paul M. Brown, “A Seed, Many Years Dormant. The Discoveries of Elsie M. Kittredge, Botanist,” *Vermont Natural History* (Published by the Vermont Institute of Natural Science, Woodstock Vermont, 1976), 10.
- <sup>41</sup> MMBF diary, 15 August 1934.
- <sup>42</sup> Connie Hitchcock 2001.
- <sup>43</sup> MMBF diary, 14 June 1930, 15 June 1930; Billings Farm Memo Diary, July 1930.
- <sup>44</sup> Billings Farm Memo Diary, August 1930, April 1931; Louis Chevalier, Hegeman-Harris Company to Mr. John French, 5 May 1931, A29, BFA; Connie Hitchcock, 2001.
- <sup>45</sup> MMBF diary, 9 August 1931.
- <sup>46</sup> MMBF diary, 24 August 1940; Mimi Bergstrom [widow of gardener Carl Bergstrom], interview by John Auwaerter, 27 June 2001, Woodstock.
- <sup>47</sup> Elizabeth’s last known diary entry for her mushroom garden was on 13 August 1922.
- <sup>48</sup> MMBF diary, 20 July 1940.
- <sup>49</sup> “Cut old maple trees Mansion lawn,” Billings Farm Memo Diary, December 1929; Mansion Guest Book, 1938, MABI; c.1940 photograph of Mansion and lawns, P22, BFA.
- <sup>50</sup> Photograph in Mansion Guest Book, 1937, MABI.
- <sup>51</sup> “Turned water on Greenhouse Mar. 18th,” Billings Farm Memo Diary, March 1938.
- <sup>52</sup> MMBF diary, 1 June 1940; “Mar 5th opened greenhouse,” Billings Farm Memo Diary, March 1941.
- <sup>53</sup> Photographs of rear of Mansion and tennis court, c.1950, Liz Hitchcock album, courtesy of Polly Hitchcock Bigham.
- <sup>54</sup> Polly Bigham Hitchcock and Connie Hitchcock, 2001.
- <sup>55</sup> Polly Bigham Hitchcock and Connie Hitchcock, 2001.
- <sup>56</sup> Polly Bigham Hitchcock and Connie Hitchcock, 2001; Mimi Bergstrom, 2001.
- <sup>57</sup> R. Kent Beattie, “The Threat of Dutch Elm Disease,” *American Forests*, August 1931, 489; George Hepting and Marvin E. Foler, *Tree Diseases of Eastern Forests and Farm Woodlands* (Washington: USDA, April 1962), 22.
- <sup>58</sup> MMBF diary, 12 September 1949. Photograph of the Mansion taken c.1954 shows the big elm gone; aerial photograph of Mansion grounds, 94.100.0189, Woodstock Historical Society.
- <sup>59</sup> Photographs of Flower Garden, 1948, Liz Hitchcock album; Connie Hitchcock 2001; Jane McDill Smith 2001.
- <sup>60</sup> Carl Bergstrom, in a 1991 interview, said that when he arrived to work on the Mansion grounds in 1949 there were rose bushes lining the circle by the porte cochere. His predecessor Murray Maynes was in the habit of burning off the grass inside the circle, because it could not be reached by mowers: some of the roses were damaged as a consequence of the repeated burnings, and the entire bed was eventually removed. Janet Houghton, Oral History files, MABI.
- <sup>61</sup> Connie Hitchcock and Polly Hitchcock Bigham, 2001.
- <sup>62</sup> Connie Hitchcock, 2001.
- <sup>63</sup> “The Party,” 1949 photograph of children dressed in antique clothing, Liz Hitchcock album; Photograph of Billings women on front steps of piazza, 1948, Liz Hitchcock album and BFA.
- <sup>64</sup> Mimi Bergstrom, 2001.
- <sup>65</sup> Mimi Bergstrom, 2001.
- <sup>66</sup> Connie Hitchcock, 2001; MMBF diary, 18 June 1943, 14 August 1943.
- <sup>67</sup> Photograph of Garden Shed, c.1945, album 39, BFA.
- <sup>68</sup> Woodstock Town Land Records, vol. 49, pages 516-19, 31 December 1948; vol. 51, pages 327-30, 6 July 1951.
- <sup>69</sup> H. Eliot Foulds, Kathryn Lacy, and Lauren Meier, “Land Use History for Marsh-Billings National Historical Park” (Boston: National Park Service Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, 1994), 73.
- <sup>70</sup> Doton map 3 (annotated), BFA; Woodstock tax assessment records, 2000; Mimi Bergstrom, 2001; Woodstock Town tax assessment records, 1 River Street, 16 January 1968.
- <sup>71</sup> Polly Hitchcock Bigham, e-mail communication with John Auwaerter, 20 August 2001.
- <sup>72</sup> Woodstock Town Land Records, John French Junior to Mary French Rockefeller, vol. 51, pages 475-76, 19 July 1952; Elizabeth French Hitchcock to Mary French Rockefeller, vol. 53, pages 143-44, 20 March 1954.
- <sup>73</sup> Foulds et al., 73; Jennison, 32.

# Cultural Landscape Report for the Mansion Grounds

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park

## French-Billings Era, 1914-1954



**National Park Service  
Olmsted Center for  
Landscape Preservation**

99 Warren Street, Brookline, MA

in cooperation with:

Faculty of Landscape Architecture  
SUNY College of Environmental  
Science and Forestry  
Syracuse, New York

### SOURCES

Estate of Frederick Billings, maps  
1 & 2 (Doton et al., 1887-88)  
Contours on Property of Mary  
F. Rockefeller (Williams, 1956)  
Topo. Plan Mansion Grounds  
(Bruno, 2001)

### DRAWN BY

John Auwaerter  
Illustrator 10, 2004

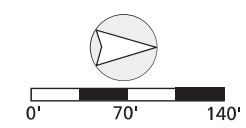
### LEGEND

- Added during period
- Assumed feature
- Removed during period
- 10' contour
- Intermittent stream
- Deciduous woods
- Conifer plantation
- Conifer tree/shrub
- Deciduous tree/shrub
- Herbaceous bed
- Unpaved road/path
- Paved road/path
- Rock outcropping
- Stone wall
- Fence/gate
- Hydrant
- Bench

### NOTES

All vegetation shown in approximate scale and location.  
Names indicated are those used during the period, when known.  
Plan illustrates conditions in 1954.

Figure 5.27





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## VI. THE ROCKEFELLER ERA, 1954-1997 <sup>1</sup>

In March 1954, Mary French Rockefeller and her husband, Laurance S. Rockefeller, became the third generation of the Billings family to care for the Mansion grounds. [Figure 6.1] They soon began to implement plans for improvement of the faded landscape and buildings. As had past generations, the Rockefellers hoped to carefully maintain the property's historic character and natural resources. Together with preservation efforts throughout the village and revitalization of the Woodstock Inn, the Rockefellers came to envision the preserved and interpreted Billings Estate—the Mansion grounds, forest, and farm—as anchors for the well-being of the Woodstock community, much in the spirit of Frederick Billings's original vision. The Rockefellers believed these resources would help to protect Woodstock's historic setting while enhancing the overall quality of life and securing the community's niche in the new tourism economy. The opening of the Billings Farm & Museum in 1983 and the passage of legislation in 1992 establishing Marsh-Billings National Historical Park were key achievements in the Rockefellers' vision of conservation stewardship, not just for the estate, but also for all of Woodstock.

Between 1954 and 1961, the Rockefellers rehabilitated the Mansion grounds by retaining many of the landscape's Victorian and early twentieth-century features, and updating others to fit their mid twentieth-century aesthetic and lifestyle. Over the course of the following four decades, the Rockefellers made limited additional changes to the landscape, except where necessary to enhance their security and privacy. Following establishment of the Marsh-Billings National Historical Park in 1992, they continued their right of life estate at the Mansion grounds for another five years, during which time they assisted in park planning and in making adjustments to the landscape to fulfill their vision of how it should be presented to the public.

### AMERICAN CONSERVATIONISTS: LAURANCE S. AND MARY F. ROCKEFELLER

Laurance S. Rockefeller (1910-2004) was born in New York City, the fourth of six children of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. Growing up in one of the most prominent and influential families in the nation, Laurance was exposed to a wide variety of places and ideas that were instrumental in developing a strong conservation ethic. The family's several homes were located in or near places where major conservation projects were located,



Figure 6.1: Laurance S. and Mary F. Rockefeller on the Mansion verandah, shaded by Dutchman's pipe, August 1985. Billings Family Archives.

including Central Park in New York City, Palisades Interstate Park in the Hudson Valley, Acadia National Park on Mount Desert Island in Maine, and Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., imparted to his children a deep regard for landscape beauty, history, and public parks. From Abby, the children learned a sense of duty to society, respect for community, interest in nature, and appreciation of art, including modern art.<sup>2</sup> Laurance's background was not unlike that of his future wife. Mary French (1910-1997), granddaughter of Frederick Billings, inherited the Billings family conservation ethic embracing a respect for nature, appreciation of landscape beauty, and service to community, with an overarching religious reverence.<sup>3</sup>

Laurance first met Mary French through her brother John, who was the Dartmouth College roommate of Nelson Rockefeller, Laurance's brother. It was not until Laurance went to Harvard Law School that he began to court Mary, who at the time was studying sculpture in Cambridge. Mary's family background in conservation, along with her interest in nature, history, and art, must have provided much in common between the two. They were married on August 15, 1934 in Woodstock. Years later, Laurance would state that he and Mary had "parallel careers" and had a wonderful "feeling of partnership" in their marriage. Mary had a keen sense of heritage and awareness for historic preservation, especially for Woodstock and the family estate.<sup>4</sup> Laurance soon embraced Mary's attachment to Woodstock, a place where they would share their common interest in leading an unostentatious lifestyle and leaving a beneficial, lasting legacy.<sup>5</sup>

Over the years that Mary owned the Mansion grounds, Laurance, or LSR as he was known to his associates, developed an impressive history of service in the field of conservation. In 1991 he became the first conservationist to be awarded the Congressional Gold Medal. In making the award, President George Bush called him a "champion of natural and human values." For LSR, conservation was "central to the welfare of the people" and nothing was more important to him than the "creation of a conservation ethic in America."<sup>6</sup> LSR was a pioneer in providing risk capital to new business ventures and supported a number of causes, such as cancer research, in a broad philanthropic program. Conservation, however, was a primary interest and a thread that wove through many business and philanthropic interests.<sup>7</sup>

By the time of his Congressional Gold Medal, LSR was credited with many achievements significant in the history of the conservation movement. He concentrated many of his efforts on his home state of New York; he became instrumental in conservation of the Hudson River Valley, spearheaded efforts to increase protection of the Adirondack Mountains as an ecosystem, funded inner-city park development, and served on numerous park—and conservation-related commissions. On a national scale, he founded the American Conservation Association,

donated ten thousand acres for the creation of Virgin Islands National Park, and served as conservation advisor to five presidents from Eisenhower through Ford. In 1958, he served as chairman of the newly created federal Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission, which in the 1960s led to creation of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Wilderness Act, and the National System of Scenic Rivers. In the 1960s, LSR served as chairman of the White House Conference on Natural Beauty and the Citizens' Advisory Committee on Recreation and Natural Beauty with Lady Bird Johnson, and as chairman of the Citizens' Advisory Committee on Environmental Quality under Presidents Nixon and Ford.<sup>8</sup> Although LSR often looked for leadership to the federal government—and in particular to the National Park Service—he was a strong advocate of fostering partnerships between the public and private sectors.

On the private side, LSR engaged in a range of venture capital activities; these included significant resort developments in which he instilled his own trademark mix of commerce and conservation, mixing public stewardship and private enterprise. Such resorts, in LSR's view, produced economic activity that would help sustain areas of great natural beauty and historic significance while opening them up for enjoyment by the public. Beginning in the 1950s, he developed a number of high-quality resorts near national parks and other areas of great natural beauty in the Caribbean, Hawaii, and the Rockies. An example was Jackson Lake Lodge. [Figure 6.2] This lodge not only provided visitors to the adjoining Grand Teton National Park with much-needed accommodations, but also the profits from its operation were put into the park for conservation purposes. LSR operated many of his resorts in a similar manner. Most—including the Woodstock Inn & Resort that LSR built in the late 1960s—were developed and managed under the banner of a company named Rockresorts. LSR sold Rockresorts in the 1980s, but retained ownership of the inn.<sup>9</sup>

Working through Rockresorts, LSR developed his resorts with great sensitivity to their outstanding natural environments, which he believed to be their highest attributes. Yet

he also valued the cultural environment, and contributed to its protection by, for example, removing incompatible modern development and restoring and protecting historic buildings and features. LSR was a centrist in conservation, recognizing the need for appropriate development; he was also a centrist when it came to historic preservation, seeking a synergy of natural, cultural, economic, and community values.<sup>10</sup>

LSR's conservation philosophy reflected significant changes in the American conservation movement that were occurring by the mid twentieth century. From its nineteenth-century roots in responsible-use practices, such as advocated by George Perkins Marsh and practiced by Frederick Billings, conservation by the 1960s was evolving into a more complex ecology-based environmentalism that was gaining in political importance across the nation. Whereas Marsh and Billings favored efficient stewardship and saw nature largely in terms of its relationship with and benefit to humankind, environmentalists argued for preservation of nature for nature's sake, often supported by science.

LSR rejected many environmentalists' apocalyptic forecasts for the world, believing instead that wild ecosystems could be preserved within the context of a responsible-use conservation philosophy. He placed a high value on human benefit, and held an optimistic view of humankind's ability to remedy environmental problems and even to improve upon nature.<sup>11</sup> LSR stressed the importance of developing recreational parks and, like Frederick Billings before him, of landscape beauty as a necessity for the individual and a reflection of the health of society and its balance with nature.<sup>12</sup> LSR called the concept of balancing responsible use and preservation, "Conservation for People." Today known as "conservation



Figure 6.2: Jackson Lake Lodge, one of LSR's resort developments. Courtesy Grand Teton Lodge Company, Moran, Wyoming. The lodge, opened in 1955, overlooks Grand Teton National Park.

stewardship," this concept guided the Rockefellers' plans for the future of the Billings Estate and the Woodstock community.<sup>13</sup>

## MODEL OF CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP

Like many places in Vermont in the early 1950s, Woodstock remained a small village surrounded by rural countryside, little changed from previous decades except for the growth of winter sports, road building, and the continued decline of the agricultural economy. Within a decade, however, a period of unaccustomed change loomed for Woodstock and all of Vermont. The postwar economic boom, combined with the rapid growth of automobile-based culture, swept over much of Vermont in the late 1950s and 1960s. No longer a remote rural backwater, Vermont became New England's "Beckoning Country," newly connected to population centers by interstate highways.<sup>14</sup>

In Woodstock, new commercial buildings and second homes were spreading, even though the year-round population still remained below the peak it had attained in 1840.<sup>15</sup> Unlike the concentration of earlier country places near villages, the second homes of the 1950s and 1960s typically were dispersed across the landscape, often with little connection to existing communities. New commercial development followed a similar pattern, strung out along highway US 4. Although Woodstock had established a planning commission, the village lacked zoning or other planning measures to regulate development. In 1966, planning commission chairman George Williamson defended a proposed zoning ordinance for Woodstock:

*Can anyone seriously question the need for zoning? Think of the changes which have taken place in the Village of Woodstock in the last ten years, the gradual despoiling of the village's beauty in certain areas by a haphazard, uncontrolled increase in building. With the completion of I-91 on our doorstep and the rush from the metropolitan areas to places like "nice, quiet, little Woodstock," think of what the NEXT ten years can bring!*<sup>16</sup>

Spending their summers and other times of the year with friends and family in Woodstock, Mary and Laurance Rockefeller were attuned to these changes. It was during this same time that Laurance Rockefeller began to take an active part in shaping the future of Woodstock. For LSR, Woodstock's natural environment, rural setting, and historic village architecture combined to produce an exceptionally beautiful and characteristic New England village. Woodstock's uniqueness had to be preserved, and he saw that its attributes were keys to the economic future of the community. Outside of the Billings Estate, LSR began to help shape Woodstock's environment and economy in the 1960s. In 1960 and 1961 he acquired and improved the Mount Tom and Suicide Six ski areas, both located a short distance north of the Mansion, and the Woodstock Country Club on the south side of the village. Together, these three properties formed the recreational core of what by the end of the 1960s became the Woodstock Inn & Resort.



Figure 6.3: The new Woodstock Inn, opened in 1969, view south from the Green. Woodstock Historical Society.

The resort would serve as an economic anchor to sustain and lead the area's growing tourism and four-season recreation industry. The centerpiece would be the Woodstock Inn, a resort hotel on the village green, which formerly had been the center of Woodstock's railroad-based tourism and country place society. By the mid 1960s the old 1892 inn was in disrepair and financial trouble, and in 1967 it was determined that saving the old building was not feasible. Amid speculation about whether a supermarket or some other new development might replace the inn in its prominent location, LSR stepped in.<sup>17</sup> He acquired the old inn, and following a gala final ball that Mary and he hosted, he demolished it and replaced it with a new building. Begun in July 1968, the large but understated Colonial Revival-style inn was set back on its site on the Green. [Figure 6.3] The site was designed by Bryan J. Lynch, a landscape architect who had assisted LSR in developing his other resorts.

At the time LSR was rebuilding the Woodstock Inn, he was also beginning to articulate the role that the Billings Estate could play in sustaining Woodstock's new tourism economy. In June 1967, LSR's ally in national beautification and outdoor recreation efforts, Lady Bird Johnson, came to Woodstock to designate the Mansion a National Historic Landmark for its significance in the history of American conservation as the boyhood home of George Perkins Marsh. [Figure 6.4; nomination form in Appendix G]. On her

visit, the First Lady also designated other landmarks and federal undertakings in the area, but LSR had no doubt encouraged this designation for the Mansion. Although federal landmark designation could not guarantee that a property would be preserved, it identified the Mansion as worthy of preservation. The designation impressed LSR with a sense of the potential of the Billings Estate to enhance the tourism base of Woodstock by attracting visitors to its historic farm, Mansion, and Mount Tom forest. Preservation of the estate would also help to conserve a major part of Woodstock's natural and historic character. Ultimately, the preserved estate might operate in synergy with the historic village, its scenic setting, and the amenities and recreational resources of the resort to sustain the tourism basis of Woodstock's economy, not unlike the way that his resorts at the Grand Tetons and Virgin Islands related to their settings and adjacent National Parks.<sup>18</sup>

The second major entity that LSR created following the landmark designation of the Mansion was The Woodstock Foundation, Inc. Established in 1968, the Foundation was chartered "to preserve and enhance the physical, cultural, and spiritual environment of the people of the State of Vermont, and of the United States of America, and primarily of the Town of Woodstock and the area comprising the watershed of the Ottauquechee Valley."<sup>19</sup> In subsequent years, the Woodstock Foundation and the Woodstock Inn & Resort would fund and direct various physical



**Figure 6.4:** Laurance and Mary Rockefeller riding through Woodstock in an antique automobile with Lady Bird Johnson during her visit in 1967 designating the Mansion as a National Historic Landmark. Billings Family Archives. The car is stopped in front of the 1892 Woodstock Inn.

improvements, planning studies, and institutions in the region. These included the acquisition of historic properties and open spaces for preservation and conservation; the burying of overhead utility lines through the village and leading up to the Mansion; and the publication of a history of Woodstock's second century as a companion to the history by Henry Swan Dana that Frederick Billings had commissioned. From the 1970s onward, the Woodstock Foundation would also focus much of its effort on preserving the Billings Estate and establishing its place in Vermont's cultural scene and Woodstock's tourism industry.

#### **PRESERVING THE BILLINGS ESTATE FOR PUBLIC BENEFIT**

By 1954, the core of the Billings Estate had been subdivided under several owners according to the will of Mary Montagu Billings French. West of the seventy-four acres owned by Mary French Rockefeller that included the Mansion grounds, the old estate lands belonged to the town, Billings Farm, Inc., and Mary's brother, John French. Across Elm Street (Route 12) to the east, the Mansion overlooked the Billings Farm and Dairy, also owned by Billings

Farm, Inc., as well as the Octagon Cottage owned by Liz Hitchcock. Billings Farm and Dairy prospered during the 1950s and 1960s under the management of Harold Corkum. The farm milked its own herd of Jersey cows and bought milk from other herds, which it bottled and made into a variety of dairy products that were well known in the Woodstock area. [Figure 6.5] In addition to the dairy, Billings Farm also continued to manage the forest plantations on Mount Tom. In 1956 these were designated as Tree Farm No. 1 under the newly established Vermont Tree Farm System.<sup>20</sup>

For many years, Laurance and Mary Rockefeller enjoyed restoring and developing the Mansion as their seasonal home. At the same time, they and Billings Farm, Inc. continued the family's long tradition of allowing the public free access and use of the system of carriage roads and trails throughout the Mount Tom forest, and the Billings Farm also welcomed local visitors.

In the late 1960s, as he was acquiring and redeveloping the Woodstock Inn, Laurance Rockefeller began to frame a

**Figure 6.5: A Billings Dairy logo.** John McDill, "The Billings Farm" (Unpublished pamphlet, 1971). Billings Farm & Museum.



vision for the preservation and development of the old Billings Estate, including the Mansion, the forest, and the farm. In the early 1970s an opportunity emerged with the decline of Billings Farm, Inc. as a profitable agricultural operation. The shareholders (all Billings's descendants, including Mary Rockefeller) agreed to sell the corporation to Laurance Rockefeller in 1974, including the main farm on the Ottauquechee intervale and the forest on Mount Tom. The purchase thus brought much of the historic core of Frederick Billings's estate into Mary and Laurance Rockefeller's ownership. With

this land, the Rockefellers hoped to implement their most valued conservation-stewardship objectives. Through the Woodstock Foundation, Inc. and as part of their broad involvement in Woodstock, the Rockefellers hoped to preserve the Billings Estate and perpetuate the Billings family heritage in the community for future generations. LSR elaborated on this vision at the Foundation's 1977 annual meeting:

*My long-range goal is to eventually include the Mansion, the Farm and related facilities, and the forests as an integrated unit to the approximate scope and extent that it existed during the time of Frederick Billings. Other properties that I have bought will supplement the family properties, and help protect the larger Woodstock area from deterioration through unwise development.*

*Primary objectives of the Foundation will be the preservation of open space; the preservation of the family farm and related historical values (under the family name); expansion of the outdoor recreational opportunities inherent in the Woodstock area because of its great natural beauty; the encouragement and practice of the best practices of forest management; the study of ecological methods of harnessing natural resources to achieve energy without pollution or depletion of our non-renewable resources; and the creation of broad educational values related to the above areas of interest, many of which will hopefully benefit the farmers of Vermont in the future . . .*

*I anticipate that our hopes and plans will evolve over a period of many years. I am hopeful that with the help of the family, we will add to the balance of Woodstock, and have a beneficial effect on the long-term economic vitality and stability of the community.<sup>21</sup>*

One of LSR's first projects following his purchase of Billings Farm, Inc. was to improve the farm operation, carrying forward its historic role as a model of Vermont agriculture. In 1974 he hired a new farm manager, James R. "Bob" Lord, a well-known Jersey cattle breeder who, over

the next two decades, would bring the farm much success, once again earning national distinction for the Jersey herd. Laurance and Mary also hoped that the farm would become a vehicle for the preservation of Vermont's rural heritage and serve as an effective tool for public education in agriculture, conservation, and history.<sup>22</sup>

Even before LSR's purchase of the farm, the Woodstock Foundation took the first step toward these educational goals. In 1972 it initiated the Vermont Folklife Research Project, a research and collecting effort to study and preserve vanishing remnants of traditional farm life in East Central Vermont. The project was housed in the Carriage Barn (Stable) on the Mansion grounds from 1977 to 1983.<sup>23</sup> Early in the course of the project, the Foundation set the goal of establishing a permanent museum. Among the concepts explored were a folk museum on the European open-air museum model, a working water-powered mill, an interpreted operating dairy farm, and nature trails and carriage rides. Also considered was the concept of preservation and interpretation of the Mansion as a historic house museum.<sup>24</sup>

Through the late 1970s the Woodstock Foundation engaged a number of leading museum professionals to help the folklife project assess what form of interpretive institution would be most appropriate for Woodstock.<sup>25</sup> By 1980 the Foundation had engaged Design & Production, Inc. to develop plans for a permanent exhibition, entitled "The Vermont Farm Year in 1890," to be housed in four renovated barns at the main farm. The exhibit was to be the interpretive centerpiece of a working farm museum at Billings Farm, which, according to LSR, would help preserve Vermont's agricultural heritage and the historic rural setting of Woodstock:

*We have tried for many years to find meaningful ways in which this heritage [Billings Farm] could be shared with others while helping to preserve the historic value and delightful charm of the town and the unspoiled rural beauty of the surrounding area . . . The proposed museum offers a wonderful means of restating and reaffirming the culture*

*and values so characteristic of Vermont-hard work, thrift, honesty, and self-sufficiency combined with hope and faith in the future, nourished by an innate belief and trust in God.*<sup>26</sup>

Opened in 1983, the Billings Farm & Museum supplanted the folklife research project and it soon became a major attraction in Woodstock for local visitors, school children, and tourists alike. Initially anticipating an annual visitation of forty-three thousand, the museum's audience grew to sixty thousand by the early 1990s, as it gained recognition as an important outdoor museum in Vermont and the Northeast. For its public opening, the Billings Farm & Museum constructed a visitor center designed by Sasaki Associates of Watertown, Massachusetts. The new building was connected to the farm's renovated exhibit barns both stylistically and physically. Nearby, a parking lot was built on land formerly part of the old Windsor County Fairgrounds. [Figure 6.6] A few years later, the lot was doubled in size to accommodate the museum's growing attendance.

The Billings Farm & Museum combined the "Farm Year" exhibits that had been developed out of the work of the folklife project with LSR's revived operating dairy farm, which he continued to own. Together, these interpreted Vermont farm life around 1890 (the year of Frederick Billings's death), as well as contemporary dairying practices. In the late 1980s the museum restored the farm manager's house to its original 1890 appearance as a living-history facility for interpretation of the era of Frederick Billings. This furthered the treatment of the farm as a historic site. Soon after, LSR gifted the farm property and operation to the Woodstock Foundation, which led to the merger of the farm with the museum and full development of the farm's educational mission.<sup>27</sup>

Following the opening of the Billings Farm & Museum, the Rockefellers explored a number of alternatives for preserving the Mansion grounds and Mount Tom forest and opening them to the public. Ultimately, they determined to donate these properties to the people of the United States for creation of a national park. Their decision expressed their belief that the best, most sustainable solution for



continued stewardship of the historic Billings Estate lay in the collaboration of two entities, one public (the National Park Service) and one private (The Woodstock Foundation, Inc.). This decision echoed LSR's philosophy of the value of combined public and private participation in the creation of parks and places for outdoor recreation. It also echoed his vision for the future of Woodstock, with a tourist economy anchored by the combination of the park, the Woodstock Foundation, and the Woodstock Inn & Resort.<sup>28</sup>

Mary and Laurance Rockefeller's vision came to fruition with the establishment in 1992 of Marsh-Billings National Historical Park, later to be renamed Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park. They expressed their concept in testimony before both houses of Congress, as legislation made its way toward enactment. They envisioned a park that would reflect their sense of purpose for the conservation, stewardship, and interpretation of the Billings Estate, with the Mansion grounds and forest operated in partnership with their other Woodstock interests, particularly the Woodstock Foundation and the Billings Farm & Museum. Working side by side, the park and the Billings Farm & Museum would present the conservation stewardship heritage of George Perkins Marsh and Frederick Billings through the generations

**Figure 6.6:** Aerial view looking northwest over the Billings Farm & Museum, opened to the public in 1983, photographed c.1998. Courtesy of Mayer Photographics, Rutland, Vermont. The new parking lot and visitor center are visible on the far side of the farm buildings. The Mansion grounds are at the left.

down to Mary and Laurance Rockefeller. Working together, these institutional colleagues would preserve the estate for the enjoyment and educational benefit of a broad range of visitors.<sup>29</sup>

Early in January 1993, Mary and Laurance Rockefeller delivered deeds to the Mansion grounds and forest to Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan. The Sterling property, which had been subdivided in 1951, and the Gardener's Cottage at 3 North Street, were the only portions of the original Mansion grounds not transferred to public ownership. The Rockefellers retained a right of life estate in the property, and they pledged a gift of the Mansion contents upon the conclusion of their tenancy. LSR also pledged an endowment fund that would be held by the Woodstock Foundation for the purposes of preservation and conservation maintenance of the Mansion grounds and forest. He gave scenic easements to help preserve the park's viewshed. In addition, he pledged a fund for the community of Woodstock to offset the effect



of the removal of park property from the tax rolls. Altogether, the value of the Rockefellers' gift to the people of the United States amounted to \$21.4 million.<sup>30</sup>

### **REHABILITATION OF THE MANSION GROUNDS, 1954-1961**

When they acquired the Mansion grounds in 1954, Mary and Laurance Rockefeller found a landscape much in need of improvement. The condition of the property was probably a factor in Mary Rockefeller's taking ownership. Even though Mary's sister Elizabeth ("Liz") Hitchcock and her family had for many years spent summers at the Mansion, Liz and her brother John French understood that Mary and Laurance Rockefeller had both the interest and the ability to improve and maintain the property.<sup>31</sup>

In 1955, the Rockefellers began work on their improvement plans, scheduling construction so that Liz and Ethan Hitchcock and their two young children, Connie and Polly, could continue to spend summers at the Mansion grounds. Liz Hitchcock planned eventually to use the Octagon Cottage, which she had received in the settlement of her mother's estate, as her family's summer home once the children were grown. During the years of major improvements, the Rockefellers visited but did not begin spending summers at the Mansion until 1961, by which time most of the work had been completed.<sup>32</sup>

The Rockefellers applied their interest in preserving the nineteenth-century character of Woodstock village to their treatment of the Mansion grounds. LSR had a meticulous eye for detail and an appreciation for manicured landscapes (not unlike Frederick Billings), and he saw the need for significant improvements. He believed in enrichment and enhancement of the best features of the past, rather than academic restoration.<sup>33</sup> Mary Rockefeller had a more sentimental attachment to the Mansion grounds, which she wished to preserve as part of her family's legacy.<sup>34</sup>

In the end, the Rockefellers' rehabilitation of the Mansion grounds proved remarkably sensitive for the mid-twentieth-century period in which it was undertaken. Although it

had become popular to preserve buildings from the nation's early history (a trend that had been greatly encouraged by the Rockefeller family's restoration work at Colonial Williamsburg), the tastes of the 1950s and 1960s did not favor the Victorian era. By this time, the International Style was the favorite architectural design mode, expressing a building's volume and structure with open, flowing spaces stripped of ornament, much in contrast with the dark colors, complex massing, and intricate details of the late nineteenth century. Landscape design during this period was most often dominated by the same English landscape gardening style that was preferred at country places during Frederick Billings's time. Although more spacious and simple, this style during the mid twentieth century still represented an idealized rural scene with open lawns, curving drives, and naturalistic vegetation, appropriate for a nation preoccupied with the pastoral ideal of the suburbs. The intimate neoclassical and old-fashioned garden styles had fallen out of fashion, but there was still a strong interest in outdoor living spaces, often around a pool and patio. A minor resurgence in native and wild gardening, coinciding with the growth of the environmental movement and ecological conservation, was also evident.

Thus, the overall character of the Mansion grounds was still appropriate for the mid twentieth century, although its details and buildings needed updating. The Rockefellers therefore retained the general character of the landscape defined by the lawn, plantations, specimen trees, drives, and perimeter enclosure, but created a more open and simplified feeling internally by removing paths, shrubs, and hedges. They enhanced leisure and active recreational uses by improving the pool and adding a putting green, but also put much effort into rehabilitating the naturalistic gardens and paths on the hillside.

For the improvements, the Rockefellers engaged two designers who had previously worked elsewhere with the family: Theodor Muller (c.1910-1990), an architect and interior designer; and Zenon Schreiber (1904-1989), a landscape designer. [Figure 6.7] LSR knew of Muller from the architect's work at Nelson Rockefeller's Fifth Avenue

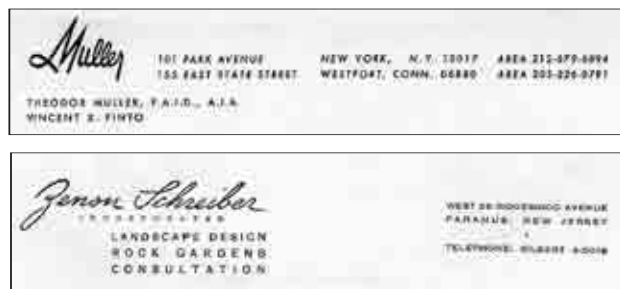


Figure 6.7: Letterhead from the offices of Theodor Muller and Zenon Schreiber. Billings Family Archives.

apartment in New York City. Muller was a graduate of the architecture program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the late 1920s. He soon went to work for the prominent interior decorator Dorothy Draper, and developed his own specialty in interior design, eventually forming a practice in Manhattan and Connecticut. He was a member of the American Institute of Architects and was named Fellow of the American Society of Interior Designers.<sup>35</sup>

Figure 6.8: Rock gardens at the Buck Estate, Far Hills, New Jersey, designed by Zenon Schreiber in the late 1930s. *Architectural Digest* vol. 4., no. 9 (September 1983), 137. The upper portion of the rock outcropping is natural, the lower was designed by Schreiber.



The Rockefellers were familiar with Zenon Schreiber from work he did at the Rockefeller estate in Pocantico Hills, New York, beginning in the 1940s.<sup>36</sup> Schreiber was raised in Chur, Switzerland, and in 1924 he earned a diploma in St. Gall for horticulture and landscape design; he also received a special citation for architectural drawing and a commendation for his personal herbarium of alpine plants. He then went to work in Geneva, where he gained expertise in arboriculture and fruit culture. In March 1931, he went to the United States and found work in a firm that specialized in rock and wall gardens. In 1936, he began his own practice in landscape design and construction, with a specialty in rock gardens, representing the alpine landscape of his native Switzerland. Between 1936 and 1946, Zenon Schreiber earned ten first prizes and eleven gold medals for his designs, including the New York Horticultural Society Medal; he also designed a rock garden for the Gardens On Parade exhibit at the New York World's Fair of 1939. Schreiber maintained his office and home in Paramus, New Jersey. Aside from his work for Mary and Laurance Rockefeller, Schreiber designed landscapes and rock gardens at the Governor's Mansion in Albany (for Governor Nelson Rockefeller), the New York Botanical Garden, the Birmingham Botanical Gardens in Alabama, the Von Trapp family home in Vermont, President Eisenhower's estate in Gettysburg, and Leonard J. Buck's estate in Fair Hills, New Jersey. Of this last garden, built in the late 1930s, Schreiber wrote: "What we wanted above all was to make a garden that retained its natural look; that, despite dynamiting and digging, would not be recognized as man-made."<sup>37</sup> [Figure 6.8] He would take a similar approach in his work at the Mansion grounds.

#### Renovation of the Mansion, Belvedere, and Terrace Gardens

In May 1955, Laurance Rockefeller contacted Theodor Muller to discuss renovation plans for the

Mansion. Work began soon thereafter and the exterior of the Mansion was largely completed by 1957.<sup>38</sup> This work included stripping paint off the exterior red brick walls and painting the trim white (the color scheme of the original 1807 Marsh house), and removing the second and

third-floor balcony porches on the south side, and the southwest roof of the verandah (as the piazza was once again called) to bring more light into the house and provide an open deck. The existing slate roof, window sashes and louvers, trim, and the front verandah and porte cochere were retained, along with much of the ornamental trim. [Figure 6.9] Recalling the project years later, Muller described the intent of the exterior renovations:

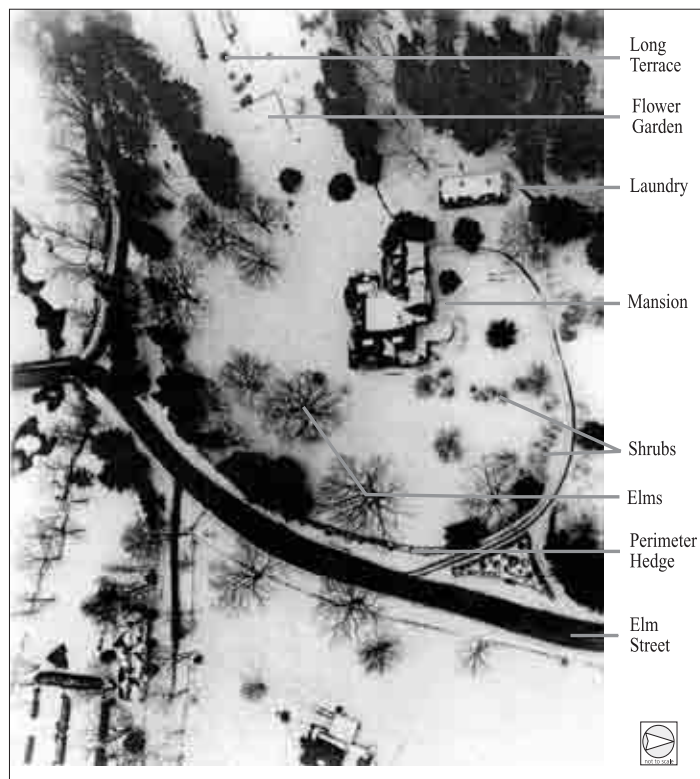


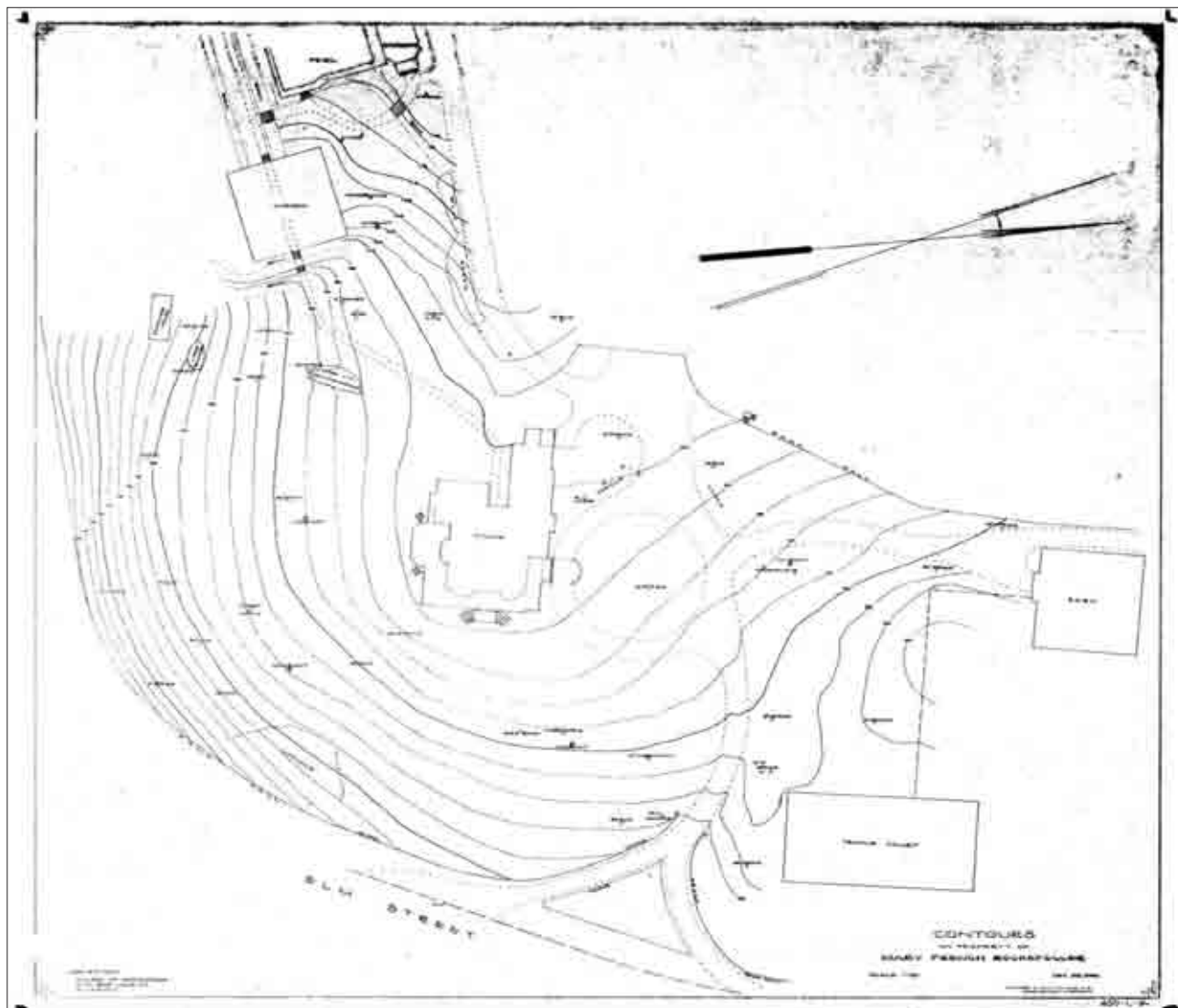
Figure 6.9: The Mansion following exterior renovations designed by Theodor Muller between 1955 and 1957, photograph by Gordon Sweet, c.1970. Woodstock Historical Society.

*The contemporary eye looks for a brighter, lighter and more cheerful house both inside and out. The dark gray paint was removed from the brick revealing a variety of good reds and interesting textures as well as the discernable outlines of bricked up windows, doors or other evidence of an ancient alteration. The artful and playful woodwork, trim and cornices were brought back into pure white paint, a stunning combination set off by the great variety of greens in the landscape.<sup>39</sup>*

While the renovation of the Mansion proceeded, work began on the surrounding landscape. The major features extant at the beginning of the work were captured in an aerial photograph taken in early 1956, followed by a topographic survey completed in December of that year. [Figures 6.10, 6.11] One of the first major changes was at the rear of the Mansion, where the Laundry was demolished in 1956. According to Theodor Muller, the Laundry “lacked the character of the Mansion and had outlived its usefulness, so it was removed.”<sup>40</sup> In its place, a parking area with room for approximately eight cars was constructed. The addition of the parking area required rebuilding and realigning the old stone retaining wall behind the Laundry, which may have

Figure 6.10: Aerial photograph of the Mansion grounds, winter of c.1956, about one year after the Rockefellers began renovating the Mansion. Woodstock Historical Society, annotated by SUNY ESF. Aside from removing some hedges in the Terrace Gardens, landscape improvements had not yet begun.





been a remnant from the Marsh era. Other changes to the back of the Mansion included the addition of a brick wall to screen the service entrance on the kitchen wing of the Mansion, and new plantings beneath the hemlocks and Norway spruce.

Around the front and sides of the Mansion, all of the large deciduous shrubs were removed, including those that lined the main entrance and Belvedere drives. These shrubs were about fifty years old at the time, most dating to the 1903 work of Martha Brookes (Brown) Hutcheson. In conjunction with the changes to the verandah, which included the addition of a set of steps on the south side that replicated the front steps, the gravel paths were removed, allowing the verandah to descend directly to the lawn. The

Figure 6.11: Survey of the Mansion grounds completed in December 1956 by Edward Williams, Woodstock. Billings Family Archives. By this date, the Laundry and many of the paths and shrubs had been removed, the Mansion parking area constructed, and the south side of the verandah made into an open deck. The plan covers generally the same area as the photograph in figure 6.10.

path that extended down to the Summerhouses was also removed, but the one that extended from the rear door to the Terrace Gardens was retained. Along the drives, the Rockefellers had the old cobblestone gutters removed, probably due to their deteriorated condition, and resurfaced the drives in a gray gravel, similar to what had existed previously. These changes were completed by 1957.<sup>41</sup>



**Figure 6.12:** Young shrubs on the southwest side of the Mansion with winter protection, early spring 1959. Courtesy Mimi Bergstrom, Woodstock, Vermont. At the left is a sugar maple planted near where the big elm once stood.

Following these changes, the Mansion lawn was enhanced with plantings of trees and shrubs under the direction of Zenon Schreiber and with the help of Carl Bergstrom, who was kept on as head gardener.<sup>42</sup> Some of the new trees were transplants that Zenon and Carl selected from the surrounding countryside, while some were also probably purchased from nurseries.<sup>43</sup> Near where the big elm had stood off the south rear corner of the Mansion, a sugar maple and white birch were planted. Other white birch, apparently one of the Rockefellers' favorite trees, were added in small groves near the tennis court and on the hillside behind where the Laundry had stood, with a single specimen planted near the main entrance gates and next to the porte cochere. Behind the old hemlock hedge directly in front of the Mansion, the Rockefellers planted apple trees, probably to screen the Mansion from the road and to add visual interest.<sup>44</sup> By the fall of 1958, new foundation shrubs, including hemlock, mountain laurel, and winged euonymus in both geometric clipped and more naturalistic forms, had been planted around the Mansion.<sup>45</sup> Japanese yews and hemlocks were placed back from the verandah as specimens in the lawn. [Figure

6.12] To enhance the more naturalistic feeling of the foundation plantings, Dutchman's pipe was trained up the north end of the verandah adjoining the porte cochere. Around the Terrace Gardens, the Rockefellers began their improvements with work on the Belvedere, Bowling Alley, greenhouse, pool, and with plantings in the Flower Garden. At first, Laurance Rockefeller was unsure whether to keep the greenhouse (rebuilt in 1902 on the foundations of the original 1873 Grapery), so he asked Carl Bergstrom for his opinion. Being a horticulturalist by training and with experience in the greenhouse business, Carl recommended that the greenhouse be retained, convincing LSR of its utility and potential as a showpiece of the grounds.<sup>46</sup> By 1958, a new potting room was built at its west end, where the fifty-foot section had been taken down in 1940.<sup>47</sup> [Figure 6.13] This building, designed by Theodor Muller and known as the "Garden Workshop," allowed the potting-room function to be removed from the Belvedere. Reflecting their sensitivity to the historic character of the grounds, the Rockefellers had Muller design the Garden Workshop to fit in with the adjoining nineteenth-century Bowling Alley and Belvedere. The new building—a "barn-like structure" according to Muller—featured a gable tin-clad roof, two-over-two double-hung sash windows, board-and-batten

**Figure 6.13:** The repainted greenhouse and new Garden Workshop, with the pool in the foreground and cutting garden bordering the greenhouse, c.1958. Courtesy Polly Hitchcock Bigham, Evansville, Indiana. The Garden Workshop was subsequently painted white.





Figure 6.14: The Belvedere and pool following initial improvements completed by fall 1959. Billings Family Archives. The patio furniture pictured included old lawn seats and benches. Note the drop-off on left side of the pool.

and flushboard siding, and a varnished tongue-and-groove interior.<sup>48</sup>

Renovation of the Belvedere, Bowling Alley, and pool began following construction of the Garden Workshop; the work, designed by Muller, was largely completed by October 1959.<sup>49</sup> On the Belvedere, exterior alterations were limited to the south side facing the pool, which had been an interior wall within the old Tropical House demolished in 1930. According to Muller, this side “was restored with detail matching that of the other facades and with enlarged windows.”<sup>50</sup> With its bright monochrome white paint that matched the adjoining greenhouse trim, the Belvedere

produced a vivid reflection in the still waters of the pool. [Figure 6.14] A new entrance, lit by a colonial-style coach lantern, was also inserted into the south facade of the Belvedere, giving access to the Bowling Alley with its new bowling apparatus, soda fountain, and sitting area. The interior of the Belvedere was renovated into a lounge, with an office for LSR on the second floor. Outside of the buildings, the perimeter fence around the pool was removed and a curved-top brick retaining wall was built against the greenhouse and bordered with a yew hedge. A small Catskill bluestone patio was added between the pool and Belvedere, and a brick barbecue and wall were built into the adjoining grade. These improvements around the pool were, however, only the first phase in a more thorough renovation project for which Zenon Schreiber and Theodor Muller had already developed plans in the fall of 1957.<sup>51</sup> The plans would not be implemented for several years.

While these improvements were underway, Zenon Schreiber and Carl Bergstrom had begun work on rehabilitating the Terrace Gardens, continuing work Carl had been doing since his arrival in 1949. One of the first changes, done even before the Laundry had been demolished in c.1956, was the removal of the overgrown perimeter hedges around the Flower Garden and along the east end of the Long Terrace.<sup>52</sup> By the time the Belvedere and pool improvements were underway in 1959, the low hedges that framed the beds of the Flower Garden had also been removed, the fountain had been cleaned and reactivated, and the beds had been restocked with a wide variety of flowering perennials in the main beds and roses (one of Mary’s favorite flowers) in the perimeter beds adjoining the stone wall. [Figure 6.15] On the Long Terrace, the Rockefellers decided not to revive the four-hundred-foot-long flower bed along the lower walk. Instead, where the eastern end of the lower hemlock hedge was removed, they had a long bed of roses planted,



extending from the beds in the Flower Garden. Within the Long Terrace, the Rockefellers removed the line of cylindrical hedges, the walks, beds, and middle stone steps, creating an open, sloping lawn. They retained the Platt-designed bench at the west end of the terraces along with the adjoining stone steps, but did not replace the middle bench, which may have been beyond repair or removed previously.<sup>53</sup> Above the Long Terrace in the cutting garden that bordered the greenhouse, the Rockefellers had a number of crabapple trees planted. These were brought up from the Rockefeller estate, Kykuit, in Pocantico Hills, where Zenon Schreiber was also working at the time. Laurance Rockefeller did not like to see trees wasted.<sup>54</sup>

### The Hill

In 1954 when the Rockefellers acquired the Mansion grounds, the hill was the most deteriorated portion of the landscape, although its mature Norway spruce, maple, and white pine plantations provided a majestic backdrop for the Mansion and Belvedere, as well as a naturalistic forest setting only steps away from the formal grounds. The Garden, which once boasted an enormous array of vegeta-

**Figure 6.15:** The Flower Garden following 1950s renovations, view southeast from the pool, c.1960. Billings Family Archives. Note absence of old perimeter hedges and border hedges around the flowerbeds. A new yew hedge was planted along the east side facing the Mansion.

bles, plants, and fruits in Frederick and Julia Billings's day, was mostly fallow by this time, except for a small area devoted to vegetables under Carl Bergstrom's care. The Rockefellers had the old Garden Shed, built soon after Frederick Billings acquired the property in 1869, torn down in c.1956. In keeping with historic preservation sensibilities of the time, architect Theodor Muller reused some of its boards and beams in the Mansion kitchen and breakfast room, along with salvaged portions of the Mansion verandah and balconies.<sup>55</sup> The northern half of the hill, encompassing the Woodshed and mountain or main carriage road, continued to be maintained as managed forest, but largely for aesthetic and recreational purposes. Billings Farm, Inc., which then owned and managed most of the estate's forest, ceased using the Woodshed for timber purposes by the late 1950s; the adjoining saw shed

was taken down around this time. The Woodshed yard was subsequently cleared of its timber materials and maintained as a meadow.

The Bungalow, newest of the buildings on the Mansion grounds, was improved by the Rockefellers between 1959 and 1961. Theodor Muller, who was busy on the other buildings at the time, designed several minor alterations, including addition of more clerestory windows and installation of a new kitchen.<sup>56</sup> Following the renovation, the vistas to the northwest and northeast were kept open, and the brush in the adjoining woods was cleared to create the open understory that Laurance Rockefeller preferred.<sup>57</sup>

Elizabeth Billings's hillside gardens, including the Fernery and Lily Pond, had been largely abandoned for over a decade when the Rockefellers began their improvements. The water in both the Lily Pond and cascading watercourse in the Fernery had long been turned off, and the labels and paths were concealed by overgrowth.<sup>58</sup> Renovation of these gardens would not, however, be undertaken until after work was completed on the formal grounds.

### **ENHANCEMENTS FOR RECREATION, SECURITY, AND PRIVACY, 1961-1992**

In 1961, with renovation of the Mansion, Belvedere and Bowling Alley, Bungalow, and most of the formal grounds completed, the Rockefellers took up summer residence at the Mansion grounds.<sup>59</sup> The Hitchcocks in turn moved their summer home across the street to the Octagon Cottage. From this time on, Mary Rockefeller typically lived at the Mansion for about six weeks, arriving in early July and staying through her wedding anniversary on August 15; LSR would shuttle between his New York office and Woodstock (the same commute that Frederick Billings had made) on the weekends. The Rockefellers also came to Woodstock at other times of the year; for example, they hosted New Year's celebrations in the Mansion.<sup>60</sup>

From the 1960s through the 1980s, the Rockefellers continued to improve the landscape, although none of the improvements significantly altered its overall character. LSR considered the Mansion grounds to be Mary's garden, and she typically was consulted on all proposed changes.<sup>61</sup> Carl Bergstrom continued to oversee management of the grounds with the help of one or two staff. After establishment of the Woodstock Inn & Resort in 1967, Bergstrom was also occasionally assisted by its landscape maintenance crews. In 1972, LSR hired John Wiggin, a professional forester trained at the Yale School of Forestry, to manage forests on his Woodstock properties, including those within the estate. At the Mansion grounds, Wiggin directed forest management practices to enhance aesthetics and safety, which typically required thinning and removing hazard trees.<sup>62</sup> In 1980, LSR brought a British-trained horticulturist, Roy Thomas, to Woodstock to develop maintenance plans for his Woodstock properties, including the Mansion grounds. Roy Thomas was trained at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and had been employed by LSR's resort corporation, Rockresorts, since 1969, working at Jackson Hole and the Virgin Islands, among other places.<sup>63</sup> Where possible, the Rockefellers contracted out their landscape work to local firms. For major planting work, they often relied on Skyline Nursery in Springfield, located south of Woodstock; for tree care, they used Bartlett Tree Expert Company, a national firm that maintained a local office in Woodstock.<sup>64</sup>

### **The Mansion Terrace and Belvedere-Pool Entourage**

Despite its location in rural Vermont, security became a significant factor in the management of the Mansion grounds once the Rockefellers took up residence there in the early 1960s. The primary security issue during their early years of occupancy was the need for a fallout shelter in the event of nuclear war. At the time, the Rockefeller family was installing fallout shelters at most of their homes because of the Cold War and rising tensions with Cuba. At the Mansion grounds, the Rockefellers began building two of the structures in February 1962—one in the Mansion





Figure 6.16: View east from the Mansion verandah in the winter of 1962, showing excavation undertaken for construction of the Mansion fallout shelter. Courtesy Mimi Bergstrom, Woodstock, Vermont.

basement and the other in the basement of the Bowling Alley—both designed by architect Theodor Muller.<sup>65</sup> [Figure 6.16] Aside from the addition of three manhole-cover escape hatches—two located in the lawn in front of the Mansion and one in front of the Belvedere—the fallout shelters had no impact on the landscape of the Mansion grounds.

Around the time that the Bowling Alley fallout shelter was being constructed in the early 1960s, the Rockefellers were implementing plans for the pool area that had been developed by Theodor Muller in collaboration with Zenon Schreiber during the fall of 1957.<sup>66</sup> A major objective of this project was the concealment of the concrete structure, and

Figure 6.17: Elevations of proposed improvements to the pool area by Theodor Muller and Zenon Schreiber, drawn December 2, 1957. Billings Family Archives. The project was completed in 1962.

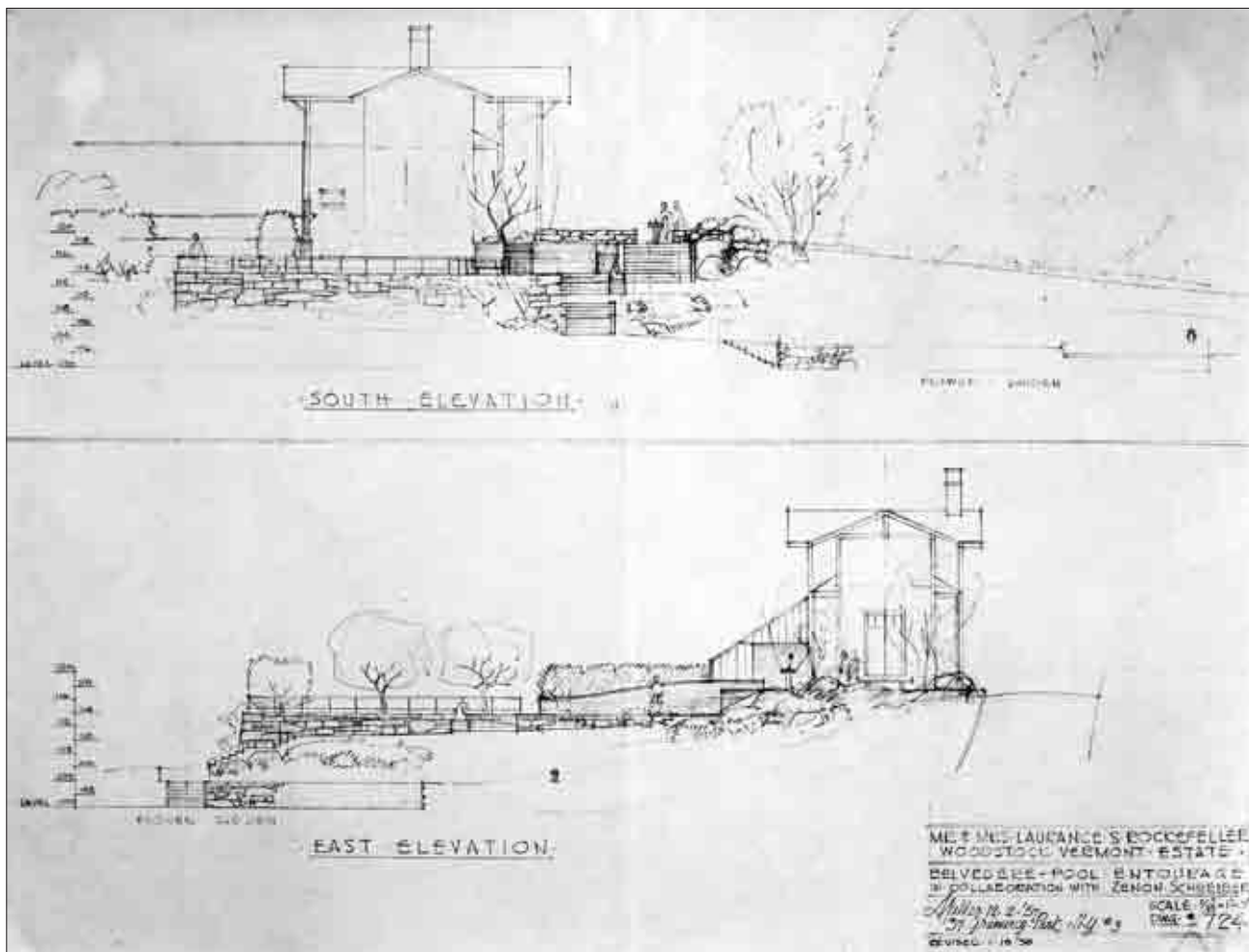




Figure 6.18: Photograph by Zenon Schreiber of the pool terrace wall under construction, 1962. Courtesy Mimi Bergstrom, Woodstock, Vermont. The view is east toward the Mansion with the pool to the left.

addition of usable space around the perimeter of the pool. Muller, who entitled the plans, “Belvedere-Pool Entourage,” was responsible for the structural elements in the plan, while Schreiber took care of the plantings. The project, largely completed in 1962, entailed construction of a terrace around the pool that was supported by rusticated stone walls and steps, alongside which Schreiber built his trademark rock gardens.<sup>67</sup> [Figure 6.17]

Zenon Schreiber’s rock gardens introduced a rustic element into the formal landscape of the Terrace Gardens, extending the wild landscape of the adjoining hillside down the slope to the edge of the Flower Garden. By the mid twentieth century, rock gardening had become fashionable in the United States, as reflected in Zenon Schreiber’s professional success and the founding of the American Rock Garden Society. In the great spring flower

shows of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, rock gardens were popular exhibits during this time.<sup>68</sup> The Rockefellers may have decided to add rock gardens to the Mansion grounds because of their familiarity with Schreiber’s work, or their fondness for the family’s summer home in the rocky landscape of Mount Desert Island in Maine. Perhaps the Swiss architecture of the Belvedere, or the existence of native rock outcroppings, also inspired the addition of the rock gardens.

The Belvedere-Pool Entourage was built by a crew that included Carl Bergstrom, his assistant James Sawyer, and Zenon Schreiber.<sup>69</sup> The major part of the project involved construction of the five-foot-high stone retaining wall, which was set fifteen feet out from the edge of the pool. [Figure 6.18] Built to support the enlarged terrace and conceal the concrete pool, the structure was finished to appear as a dry-laid stone wall, echoing the low stone wall around the Flower Garden. Schreiber and Muller designed the walls to be covered with vines, which were apparently never planted. The terrace was planted in grass, except where the bluestone-paved patio adjoining the Belvedere had been earlier built. A single honey locust tree was planted to shade the patio.<sup>70</sup>

Muller and Schreiber used slopes, steps, and rock gardens to transition the grade of the pool terrace to the lawns on the west and east sides. To the east, facing the Mansion, three sets of bluestone steps were built to provide access from the Long Terrace up to the Belvedere. The sundial that once stood in the middle of the Long Terrace, and before that in the middle of the Flower Garden, was relocated to a landing in the top set. Along these steps was the largest of Zenon Schreiber’s rock gardens, which tied in the old row of arborvitae along the drive that had been planted in c.1874. Building upon an existing bit of rock outcropping, Schreiber added rocks set with vertical strata, a favorite technique of his and one that recalled the alpine rock formations of his native Switzerland.<sup>71</sup> [Figure 6.19] He planted the garden with dwarf evergreens and alpine flowering plants such as arborvitae, andromeda, balsam, bird-nest spruces, columbine, creeping junipers, heaths, heathers, and creeping phlox.<sup>72</sup> The other rock



Figure 6.19: The Belvedere above the foreground of one of Zenon Schreiber's rock gardens, photograph by Gordon Sweet, c.1970. Woodstock Historical Society.

gardens bordering the lower steps were designed in a horizontal fashion. [Figure 6.20]

In their 1957 plans for the Belvedere-Pool Entourage, Muller and Schreiber noted that the Flower Garden was "to be studied later." Although these plans were apparently never developed, some improvements were carried out in this garden and on the Long Terrace, probably as part of the 1962 work on the pool terrace. The most prominent change was the placement of a large standing bronze statue on the former main walk of the Long Terrace, which served as a focal point on axis with the steps leading

Figure 6.20: View up the pool terrace steps with Zenon Schreiber's rock gardens to the right and the Maillol statue, *Baigneuse Drapée*, on the left, c.1970. Billings Family Archives.



down from the pool terrace. [Figure 6.20] This piece of early Modern sculpture, entitled *Baigneuse Drapée* or *The Seine*, was the work of French sculptor Aristide Maillol (1861-1944), and was made about 1921, one of six that were cast. The Rockefeller family had other Maillol bronzes on the grounds of their Pocantico Hills estate.<sup>73</sup>

The perennials in the Flower Garden were annually restocked by Carl Bergstrom under the guidance of Zenon Schreiber, until Schreiber's retirement in the late 1980s. Schreiber's work at the grounds represented a major investment on the part of the Rockefellers. During the 1979 season, for example, Schreiber spent eighty-seven days working at the Mansion grounds, for a total bill of \$19,097.21, which included the cost of plant material.<sup>74</sup> Schreiber also worked on the Hillside Gardens in addition to the flower and rock gardens near the Belvedere.

Through the years, the Flower Garden was planted with an informal variety of flowers that bloomed during the six weeks the Rockefellers lived at the grounds, a period the staff often referred to as the "six weeks of glory." There was a preponderance of blue flowers, one of LSR's favorite colors.<sup>75</sup> In May of 1963, for example, Zenon Schreiber restocked the garden with sweet woodruff, assorted asters, astilbe (meadowsweet), begonias, dianthus "Newport pink," daphne, baby's breath "Rosy Veil," pachystoma (a type of orchid), and viola "Yellow, Blue Perfection." Subsequent orders included delphinium, English daisy, bugbane, and lobelia.<sup>76</sup> Schreiber also managed the annual restocking of the rose garden that bordered the stone walls and extended along the lower part of the Long Terrace. In the late 1960s, for example, Schreiber placed an order with Jackson & Perkins of Newark, New York, for seventy-five bare-root roses, including varieties such as Tropicana, Tanya, John F. Kennedy, Golden Gamette, Fashionette, and Spartan. There was also the red rose, "Mr. Lincoln," one of Mary Rockefeller's favorites.<sup>77</sup> By the early 1980s, Zenon Schreiber's rose orders from Jackson & Perkins typically amounted to between two and three hundred plants.<sup>78</sup>

For many years, the flowerbeds in the Terrace Gardens were the only ones on the Mansion grounds. In 1967, how-

ever, the Rockefellers decided to add some color to the foundation plantings around the Mansion on the occasion of Lady Bird Johnson's visit to designate the Mansion a National Historic Landmark. They had the beds beneath the foundation shrubs planted with geraniums, and also created a small rectangular bed in the lawn along the entrance drive, a feature reminiscent of Frederick Billings's Victorian carpet beds. In subsequent years, the flowerbeds around the Mansion were not replanted, except for the rectangular bed, which was maintained at Mary's request.<sup>79</sup>

In general, LSR preferred the naturalistic appearance of trees and shrubs in the landscape, rather than the manicured and colorful appearance of flowerbeds; for him, trees represented the future.<sup>80</sup> Throughout this period, LSR made sure the mature specimen trees on the Mansion lawn—the landscape's living connection with the past—were well tended, although disease claimed many. Through contract with the F. A. Bartlett Tree Expert Company, dormant and summer sprays were applied to the two or three remaining American elms on the lawn to counter the Dutch Elm Disease, and "Acti-Dione" was sprayed on the apple trees and white birch to prevent fire blight and birch leaf miner.<sup>81</sup> At the time, using pesticides was consistent with good conservation practices developed to maintain the beauty and health of the vegetation on the grounds. Over the years, Bartlett would also deep-root feed and aerate, prune and cable, and thin canopies of the specimen trees. Despite the high level of care, the remaining American elms on the Mansion lawn eventually succumbed to Dutch elm disease; the last one—off the southeast corner of the verandah—was removed in 1981.<sup>82</sup>

To make up for the loss of canopy created by the death of the elms, and also to create a greater sense of enclosure and privacy, LSR had five mature white pines transplanted onto the lawn in front of the Mansion in the fall of 1967. [Figure 6.21] These were very large specimens, one of which was nearly fifty feet tall. They were transplanted from various places in the vicinity by Skyline Nursery, and placed in a naturalistic manner across the lawn according to the design of landscape architect Bryan J. Lynch, whom LSR knew through his work for Rockresorts.<sup>83</sup>



Figure 6.21: View of the front and north side of the Mansion, showing one of the newly planted white pines in the lawn, December 1967. Assessment Records, Town of Woodstock.

Bryan Lynch (1907-1986) was raised in Barneveld in the upper Mohawk Valley of New York, and graduated in 1933 with a degree in landscape architecture from the Harvard University School of Design.<sup>84</sup> In the 1930s, he worked on the design and construction of the Henry Hudson Parkway in New York City, a project that attracted LSR's attention. In the 1950s and 1960s, LSR hired Lynch for projects at his resort in the Virgin Islands and later brought him to Vermont, where he designed the landscape for the new Woodstock Inn in 1968. Lynch worked from an office in Reading, near South Woodstock, and kept busy with a number of projects on the Mansion grounds through the 1980s.<sup>85</sup> Lynch's work tended to involve major construction projects, while Zenon Schreiber focused on garden design and planting.

In addition to Bryan Lynch and Zenon Schreiber, LSR also employed another landscape designer at the Mansion grounds: the golf course architect Robert Trent Jones (Senior). Born in 1906 in England and raised in Rochester, New York, Jones studied at Cornell University in the late 1920s, drawing upon courses in landscape architecture, horticulture, and surveying to facilitate a self-designed program in golf-course design.<sup>86</sup> Jones visited the

Rockefellers at the Mansion grounds several times through the 1960s; his first visit may have been in c.1961, when LSR purchased the Woodstock Country Club and hired Jones to redesign the course.<sup>87</sup> By this time, Robert Trent Jones was well known in golf circles for his design of courses, including Peachtree in Atlanta and the Golden Horseshoe in Williamsburg, Virginia. Between 1968 and 1969 when he was again in town designing alterations to the Woodstock Country Club course, Jones designed a nine-hole putting green for the Rockefellers, the first golf feature on the

Mansion grounds for a family that had a long association with the sport. The putting green was positioned on the terrace west of the swimming pool where the Rosary and Potting Room once stood.<sup>88</sup> [Figure 6.22] In 1976, Jones' firm, "Robert Trent Jones, Inc. Golf Course Architects"

Figure 6.22: The putting green, view east toward pool and Mansion, 1986. Courtesy Mimi Bergstrom, Woodstock, Vermont. The putting green hole markers were not set out in this early spring view. To the right is the old hemlock hedge above the Long Terrace.



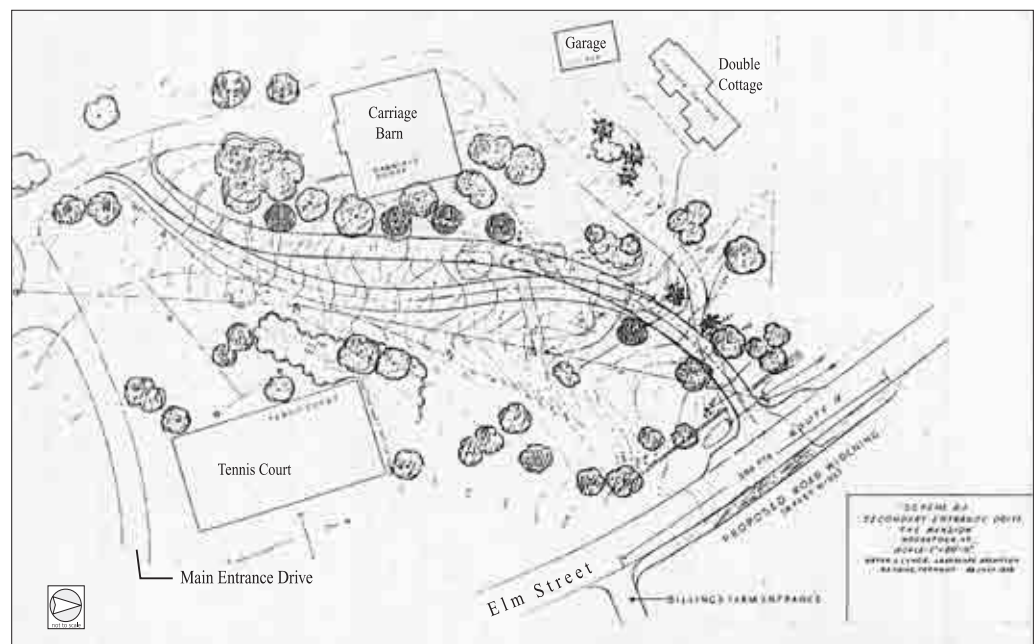
based in Montclair, New Jersey, returned to design an irrigation system for the Mansion lawn, extending from the putting green around to the swale between the Stable and the tennis court.<sup>89</sup>

In the 1970s and 1980s, many of the Rockefellers' alterations to the Mansion grounds, aside from the putting green, were made largely for reasons of privacy, security, and functional needs. These alterations had much to do with the increasingly heavy traffic on Elm Street, which had been designated as State Route 12 in the 1930s and remained the primary route north from Woodstock. Elm Street provided access to the Mount Tom and Suicide Six ski areas (both owned by LSR), and fifteen miles farther north, to Interstate 89 connecting Montpelier and Burlington. The traffic on Elm Street intruded into the Mansion grounds more noticeably by the late 1970s because of the lifting canopy on the perimeter Norway spruce, which allowed headlights to shine onto the grounds as cars headed north over the Elm Street Bridge. To screen the traffic, the Rockefellers had Bryan Lynch design a line of hemlock behind the Norway spruce along the southern edge of the Mansion lawn in 1971. Despite their desire to screen views into the Mansion grounds, the Rockefellers tried to maintain views out into the surrounding countryside, at least from the upper floors of the Mansion. At the same time as the new screening was planted, Lynch designed a vista from the Mansion to the Ottauquechee River through the perimeter Norway spruce, near the Summerhouses. He continued the line of hemlock across the vista opening in order to screen the view onto the grounds from River Street.<sup>90</sup>

By the late 1970s, the increased traffic on Elm Street became one of several issues warranting improvement of the Mansion grounds' antique system of drives. The head of the main entrance drive, with its "Y" intersection, bordering hedges, and location at the top of a hill and curve on Elm Street, sometimes proved dangerous to maneuver with the heavy traffic. Another issue was the growing size of commercial trucks making deliveries to the Mansion grounds. At the time, for example, large trucks used by heating oil suppliers had difficulty maneuvering the narrow drives that gave them access to oil tanks at the Mansion, Carriage Barn, and Belvedere.<sup>91</sup> A third issue may have been the need for improved access to the Carriage Barn, where offices of the Vermont Folklife Project were established in 1977. By the following year, the Rockefellers had decided that a new drive that would bypass both the main entrance drive and the Carriage Barn drive was the solution to these access issues.

In July 1978, Bryan J. Lynch produced plans for the new drive, which he named the "Secondary Entrance Drive," showing a gently curving alignment leading from Elm

**Figure 6.23: Bryan J. Lynch, "Secondary Entrance Drive," July 1978. Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, annotated by SUNY ESF. The alignment that was built is shown in bold, closest to the Carriage Barn.**





**Figure 6.24:** The parking area at the rear of the Mansion illustrating the new garage, built c.1977. National Park Service, 1997. The Colonial-style lantern and parking area were installed during the Rockefellers' initial improvements in the late 1950s.

Street to the main entrance drive through the swale between the Carriage Barn and the tennis court. [Figure 6.23] Constructed between September and November, the new drive matched the other drives with a crushed gravel surface and steel edging.<sup>92</sup> It was used by estate and Vermont Folklife Project staff, and for deliveries; however, the Rockefellers continued to use the main entrance drive to enter the grounds.<sup>93</sup>

Lynch designed a number of new plantings along the drive to enhance its aesthetic character, as it was not simply a delivery entrance. At the top of the drive, he designed an informal, woodland-like shrub bed to screen the parking area at the back of the Mansion from the view up the drive. This small parking area was bordered by a simple brick garage on the south end, which the Rockefellers had completed in c.1977.<sup>94</sup> [Figure 6.24] The shrub bed, completed a year or so after the Secondary Entrance Drive had been fin-

ished, was planted by Skyline Nursery with lilac, hemlock, rhododendron, and fringetree.<sup>95</sup> Around the same time, a line of yellowwood trees was added along the west side of the drive, adjoining the Carriage Barn. These trees were transplanted from the Woodstock Inn, from where they had to be removed, reflecting LSR's interest in not wasting trees.<sup>96</sup> A grove of hemlocks was also planted to screen the service entrance at the back of the Carriage Barn from the view up the new drive.

The opening of the Billings Farm & Museum at the farm complex across the road in 1983 indirectly affected the Mansion grounds. With yet more traffic passing the Mansion on Route 12, including tall yellow school buses going to the museum, the Rockefellers decided to add additional screening in front of the Mansion, where the apple trees planted over twenty years earlier were dying off. LSR had suggested replanting the old perimeter hemlock hedge, planted in 1905, but Mary was apparently opposed to losing the original plants. As a compromise, they decided to do what they had done with the perimeter along the south side of the Mansion lawn: add additional plantings behind the hedge. This secondary hedge, designed in c.1983 by Bryan J. Lynch, consisted of informal plantings of burning bush, lilac, potentilla, viburnum, and mugo pine. Soon after this, the Rockefellers further

**Figure 6.25:** View of the Mansion grounds looking west across the intervals illustrating mature Norway spruce on the hill, and several American elms surviving in the front of the Mansion, c.1964. Billings Family Archives.





Figure 6.26: The Horse Shed, view west with its original three open stalls, c.1965. Billings Family Archives. The four-rail split-rail fence in the foreground enclosed a small corral; the entire Upper Meadow was also enclosed by the same type of fence. The dirt road visible through the center of the meadow is a remnant of the original Kitchen Garden designed by R. M. Copeland.

enhanced their privacy and security by installing a security system that included in-ground floodlights around the Mansion. This system was designed in 1984, a year after the Billings Farm & Museum opened.<sup>97</sup>

### The Hill

While the Rockefellers were grappling with issues of privacy, safety, security, and access on the public front of the Mansion grounds, the hill remained a quiet retreat beneath the tall Norway spruce rising behind the Mansion. [Figure 6.25] Before they took up summer residence in 1961, the hill had not been the object of significant improvements, but over the course of the next three decades, the Rockefellers devoted much effort to its landscape, establishing a level of care not witnessed since Elizabeth Billings's day. The hill became a favorite place for the Rockefellers' daily walks, much as it had been for Mary's grandparents.

As with the formal grounds surrounding the Mansion and Terrace Gardens, the Rockefellers' work on the hill was not a restoration of what had been there, but rather a rehabilitation and improvement of its structures and plantings.

The Garden, which the Rockefellers instead called the Upper Meadow, became—except for a small vegetable garden plot maintained by Carl Bergstrom—devoted to pasture.<sup>98</sup> Here, the Rockefellers kept Mary's horses, although they retained Flicka's corral in the swale next to the Carriage Barn as late as 1968.<sup>99</sup> In c.1961, a small frame stable that became known as the Horse Shed was built on the location of the old Garden Shed, which had been torn down in c.1956. [Figure 6.26] Designed by Theodor Muller, the Horse Shed was a modest, one-story wood shingled building with a ventilating cupola and three open stalls facing the meadow. The Upper Meadow was enclosed with a four-rail split-rail fence, with gates at either end of the road that crossed it from north to south.<sup>100</sup>

Mary remained very fond of the wooded hillside, perhaps due to her childhood memories of when the Fernery and Lily Pond were at their height under Elizabeth's care; the varied paths and intimate woodland character of the gardens certainly also appealed to the Rockefellers' fondness for walking in nature. The old Fernery watercourse and the Lily Pond waterfall may also have appealed to LSR's interest in Japanese gardens, with their characteristic intimacy and use of water.<sup>101</sup> Zenon Schreiber probably urged the Rockefellers to revive the hillside, given his specialty in rock gardens and naturalistic landscapes. Throughout the years he concentrated on the formal grounds, he must have often dreamed of reviving these gardens, which early on caught his attention. When he first saw the old overgrown Fernery, Schreiber was amazed at the wide variety of plant material that still recalled the work of a botanist.<sup>102</sup> Finally in the 1960s, he began work with Carl Bergstrom on the Fernery as well as the nearby Lily Pond, which collectively became known as the "Hillside Gardens." For both men, the work of maintaining the Hillside Gardens became more of a hobby, one they would continue even after they officially retired from active employment.<sup>103</sup>





Figure 6.27: View west across the upper pool of the Waterfall Garden in later years under the care of Carl Bergstrom, c.1990. Courtesy Mimi Bergstrom, Woodstock, Vermont.

Schreiber spent the latter part of the 1960s working on the repair and reconfiguration of the cascading watercourse in the Fernery, which became known as the Waterfall Garden. In Elizabeth Billings's day the garden had five pools; between 1966 and 1969, Schreiber redesigned it into a series of four pools built of concrete with bamboo lining.<sup>104</sup> Given his expertise in rock garden design, Schreiber probably reconfigured many of the rocks, plantings, and paths in the garden, maintaining the earlier use of both stone and log steps.<sup>105</sup> He diversified the plantings from the original stock of ferns to include a variety of plantings. In 1979, for example, Schreiber ordered a wide array of woodland plants most likely intended for this garden, including lady's slipper, Venus fly-trap, liver leaf, May apple, trillium or ground lily, and bellwort. [Complete plant list in Appendix F] Schreiber also maintained many types of ferns, such as cinnamon, sensitive, maidenhair, and male ferns, along with bunchberry, trillium, Solomonseal, and European and native ginger.<sup>106</sup> The Waterfall Garden remained shaded by Norway spruce and second-generation oaks, allowing the adjoining paths to become covered in moss. [Figure 6.27]

Figure 6.28: Waterfall in Lily Pond, view from lower stone bridge, 2001. SUNY ESF.



By the 1980s, the last of the very large, old oaks dating to the Marsh era died, but the Rockefellers retained the large snag.

The Lily Pond was also revived around the same time as the Waterfall Garden. While water lilies could no longer be grown in the ponds because of the heavy shade from the surrounding trees, other water plants such as iris were planted, and the surrounding banks were stocked with a variety of woodland plants, including forget-me-nots, blue cohosh, and Christmas, cinnamon, maidenhair, ostrich, and Royal ferns, some of which may have remained from Elizabeth Billings's time.<sup>107</sup> The focal point of the garden was the source for the Lily Pond's water, a waterfall through a small gorge in the rocky slope crossed by two stone bridges, largely unchanged since it had been constructed in c.1901. [Figure 6.28] While Zenon Schreiber occasionally worked in this garden, it was largely Carl Bergstrom who was responsible for its rehabilitation and upkeep. Carl also maintained the network of paths around the Lily Pond and across the hillside, carefully sweeping them to maintain a clear route for walking.<sup>108</sup> [Figure 6.29]

While the Rockefellers enjoyed the Hillside Gardens as their own private retreat, by the late 1970s they were considering expanding the opportunities for public use of the rest of the forest, building on the longstanding tradition of free public access to this part of the estate. They added signs and wayside benches along the mountain trails and, in 1977, approved the establishment of a network of groomed cross-country ski trails to be operated through the Woodstock Inn & Resort. A few years after this, the Rockefellers decided to establish a naturalistic woodland garden, similar in character to the Hillside Gardens, but in a location accessible to the public. They selected a location in the woods west of the Woodshed—by then only used for storage—that bordered the main carriage road, a short distance from Elm Street.



Figure 6.29: A clean-swept path in the Hillside Gardens, c.1990. Courtesy Mimi Bergstrom, Woodstock, Vermont.

The new woodland garden was built under the direction of the Woodstock Resort Corporation and designed by the Rockefellers' professional forester, John Wiggin. Opened in 1980 and accessible by guided tour, the new garden was named the "Vermont Woodland Flora Exhibit." It was advertised through a brochure printed by the Woodstock Inn, which provided the following description of the garden: [Figure 6.30]

*Our exhibit of Vermont's native woodland flora is laid out in a naturalistic setting. Trees, wildflowers and ferns are clearly but unobtrusively labeled and are exhibited within the plant communities and associations where they would ordinarily be located in their natural state. The trails, lined with mossy logs and topped with wood chips, help guide you through a six acre setting as they meander from rock outcrops through bottomland and upland woods, to marshes and bogs and brooksides, and through evergreen forests.<sup>109</sup>*

Some of the plants already existed in the woods, but many were introduced. The garden was organized into six zones:

cool northern deciduous forest on the sloping land at the north end of the garden; dry upland woods and marsh in the middle; and evergreen woods, bog, and moist bottomland woods near the Woodshed. [Figure 6.31] In addition, the stone retaining wall below the Woodshed was planted as a “dripping rock wall.”

Water for this wall and the adjoining bog was piped down from the Pogue water line near the Upper Meadow. Entrance to the garden was via an old roadbed that passed beneath the Woodshed.<sup>110</sup> Although the garden did not attract significant public visitation, it was much appreciated by horticulturally minded visitors. A former president of the Woodstock Garden Club recalled the garden:

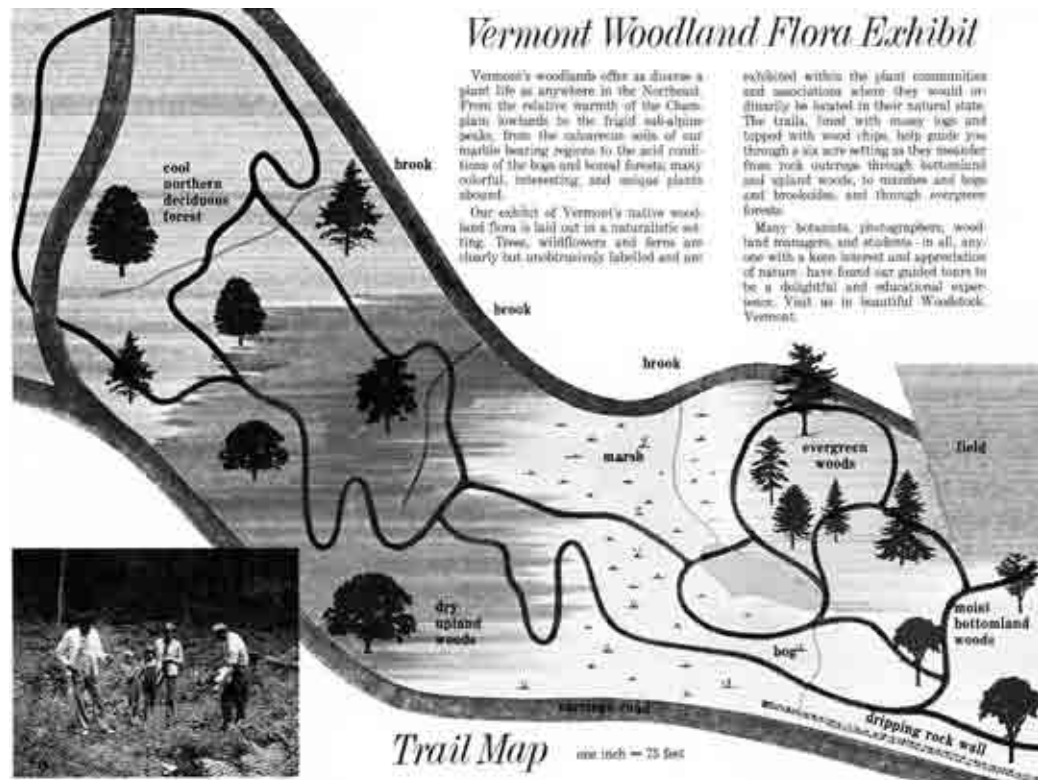
*The highlight of one of our first visits to the Woodstock Inn was a walk through the fern and wildflower garden on the Rockefeller property. Bloodroot, trillium, Solomon’s seals, baneberries and others were growing not far from Braun’s holly, fern, maidenhair, Christmas fern, royalfern and many more.<sup>111</sup>*



Figure 6.30: Cover of the “Vermont Woodland Flora Exhibit” brochure made available by the Woodstock Inn, 1980. Woodstock Inn & Resort Corporation, copy courtesy John Wiggin, White River Junction, Vermont.

With the Vermont Woodland Flora Exhibit, commonly called the “Woodland Garden,” the Rockefellers were continuing Elizabeth Billings’s botanical legacy and her use of the hill for teaching about native plants. In the early 1990s,

Figure 6.31: Trail map, “Vermont Woodland Flora Exhibit” brochure, 1980. Woodstock Inn & Resort Corporation, copy courtesy John Wiggin, White River Junction, Vermont. The map is oriented with north up and the main carriage road at the bottom of the map. The Woodshed, adjoining the dripping rock wall at the bottom right corner, is not shown.



with plans progressing for the transfer of the property to the National Park Service, the Woodland Garden was allowed to revert to native woodland, receiving only minimal seasonal care and no longer labeled or stocked with new plants.<sup>112</sup> The attention surrounding the authorization of the park in 1992 generated increased public curiosity about the Rockefellers, raising concerns about privacy and public encroachment on the Mansion. Never a great success in attracting guests from the Inn, the Woodland Garden was perceived at the time as too close to the residential area to remain an appropriate public amenity.<sup>113</sup>

### **PREPARATIONS FOR PUBLIC STEWARDSHIP, 1992-1997**

For five years following establishment of Marsh-Billings National Historical Park in 1992, Mary and Laurance Rockefeller exercised their right of life estate at the Mansion grounds; they continued to spend summers and other times there while park planning progressed toward an anticipated opening in 1998.<sup>114</sup> They stayed actively involved in the property's stewardship by assisting in planning workshops, commissioning planning studies, and making improvements to enhance the beauty and historic character of the Mansion grounds for its eventual presentation to the public.

#### **Maintenance and Improvements**

During the years preceding passage of the park legislation, the Rockefellers lost several of the professionals who had long helped them care for the landscape. Landscape architect Bryan J. Lynch died in 1986; garden designer Zenon Schreiber retired in 1987 and died two years later; and architect Theodor Muller died in 1990. Carl Bergstrom, who had served as head gardener since 1949, was nearing retirement. Due to these changes, as well as the planned establishment of the park, the Rockefellers restructured the grounds staff in the summer of 1991 by giving responsibility to the Woodstock Resort Corporation (WRC), which managed LSR's other Woodstock properties, including the Woodstock Inn & Resort. Under the

direction of Phil Lewis, the department head of the Property Operations Division of the WRC, the Mansion grounds staff included James Sawyer, long-time assistant to Carl Bergstrom; and two WRC grounds supervisors: Kim Murray and Don Wheeler. Carl Bergstrom retired at the end of 1991, but continued to work on the Lily Pond and Waterfall Garden until shortly before his death in 1997.<sup>115</sup> He and his wife Mimi still lived at the Gardener's Cottage at 3 North Street, which the Rockefellers continued to own.

The WRC staff maintained the Mansion grounds much as in prior years, with weekly mowing, upkeep of the putting green, pruning and shearing, and annual planting in the Flower Garden (also by then called the Foursquare Garden). The WRC contracted out a small part of its landscape work, including liquid fertilizing, pest and disease control, driveway grading, and planting of large trees and shrubs.<sup>116</sup> Planting design was contracted to Resortsapes, Inc., a Woodstock horticultural consulting firm founded in 1989 by Roy Thomas, the British-trained horticulturist who had developed maintenance plans for LSR's Woodstock properties during the 1980s. Roy Thomas planned and coordinated many of the changes in the landscape that the Rockefellers were contemplating in anticipation of public visitation. Most of the work was done by WRC staff.<sup>117</sup>

One of the first of these changes, made during the 1992 season, was redesign of the plantings in the Flower Garden and other herbaceous beds, which had previously been planted to bloom during the brief period that the Rockefellers were in residence. The new plantings extended the bloom period from late May through the fall—the anticipated course of public visitation. [Figure 6.32] Other changes were made to revive the rock gardens, which had not received their accustomed high level of care since Zenon Schreiber's retirement in 1987.<sup>118</sup> In May 1992, the WRC accepted a proposal from the landscape firm, Primavera, of Barnard, Vermont, to rehabilitate the rock garden beds along the pool terrace steps, putting green, and north side of the Flower Garden. Primavera retained the overall character of the rock gardens, but adjusted the

bed limits and diversified the plantings in part to establish a bloom period to commence the last week of May.<sup>119</sup>

Aside from adding more than eight hundred plants in the flower beds, the Rockefellers had Roy Thomas maintain Zenon Schreiber's tradition of extensive yearly plantings in the Flower Garden rose garden. In the fall of 1992, for example,



Thomas ordered 220 new rose plants from French's of Pittsfield, Vermont, representing twelve different types with an emphasis on perfumed varieties and standards. A few years later, tree roses were added to the rose beds in the Flower Garden so that Mary Rockefeller would not have to bend down far to smell them.<sup>120</sup> Over the course of the decade, Thomas varied the plantings slightly from year to year, but maintained the overall form and variety.

In addition to changes in the flowerbeds and rock gardens, the Rockefellers also began to open up the views from the Mansion, which they envisioned as an important part of the visitor experience. The once-prominent view east from the Mansion verandah to the Ottauquechee intervale had become obscured by the secondary hedge planted earlier in the decade, as well as by growth of the specimen white pines planted in 1967.<sup>121</sup> In order to reopen this view, between 1993 and 1995 LSR removed two of the large white pines (another had blown down in a 1985 storm) and several trees across Elm Street on the Hitchcock's Octagon Cottage property; he also lowered the secondary hedge.<sup>122</sup> [Figure 6.33] In c.1997 as one of his last improvement projects on the Mansion grounds, LSR opened a vista down the main entrance drive looking east to the intervale meadow, which he envisioned as an important first impression for visitors. The overgrown hemlock hedge adjoining the

**Figure 6.32: View east through the Flower Garden illustrating diversity of flowering annuals and perennials characteristic of plantings made after 1992, photographed summer 1994. Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation. Note that the garden was in partial shade due to growth of adjoining hemlocks.**

triangular island and drive was replanted, and the mature hemlock trees within the island were removed and replaced with small birch trees, daffodils, bluebells, and ferns.<sup>123</sup> [Figure 6.34]

In 1993, the year following enactment of the park legislation, the Rockefellers gave much thought to the issue of visitor access to the Mansion grounds, an issue they had addressed fifteen years earlier with the Secondary Entrance Drive. The pending opening of the National Historical Park, however, raised the potential need for additional improvements. To address this, the Rockefellers commissioned the firm of Robert A. White, Landscape Architects and Planners of Thetford Center, Vermont. In October 1993, the firm completed an analysis with the objective of accommodating parking for between fifteen and twenty cars on the Mansion grounds.<sup>124</sup> White examined expanding the Mansion parking area, and the potential for new parking areas below the Coachman's Cottage, around the Carriage House, and on the site of the



Figure 6.33: View east from the Mansion verandah across the farm meadow to Blake Hill in the distance, following removal of obstructing vegetation between 1993 and 1995, photographed 2000. SUNY ESF.

tennis court. [Figure 6.35] White also suggested several different alternative designs to enhance interpretation. These included restoring the tennis court back to a croquet ground, exposing potential remains of the first Marsh house below the tennis court, and removing the 1978 service drive. Although none of these recommendations were implemented, the study reflected the Rockefellers' active interest in how the National Historical Park and the Mansion grounds in particular would be developed and presented to the public. Overall, Laurance and Mary Rockefeller hoped to see the Mansion grounds retain a lived-in feeling, and wanted the public to feel welcomed as their personal guests.<sup>125</sup>

In April 1997, Mary French Rockefeller died at the age of eighty-seven. For more than four

decades, her strong attachment to the Mansion grounds had been a major force in the preservation of the landscape and in the establishment of the National Historical Park. She and her husband had for some time intended to conclude their life estate in the property at the end of 1997; she had hoped to enjoy and to be a part of the opening of the park the following year.<sup>126</sup> Following her death, LSR

proceeded with their plans, transferring possession of the property to the National Park Service on January 1, 1998, thereby allowing for opening of the National Historical Park to the public later in the year. Even before that time, the park had begun to hire staff and prepare for opening, operating out of temporary offices provided by the Woodstock Foundation at the Billings Farm & Museum.<sup>127</sup>

Figure 6.34: View east through the gates on the main entrance drive illustrating hemlock hedge and trees in triangular island prior to creation of the entrance drive vista in 1997, photographed 1994. Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation.





**Figure 6.35: Alternative Design for access and parking on Mansion grounds by the Office of Robert A. White, ASLA, October 9, 1993, prepared for Mr. and Mrs. Laurance Rockefeller. Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park.**

## SUMMARY

Between 1955 and 1961, Laurance S. and Mary French Rockefeller devoted substantial effort and resources to returning the Mansion grounds to the beautiful and manicured landscape it had once been. While respecting the historic character of the landscape, they brightened up the Mansion and Belvedere, removed the Laundry, added a Garden Workshop, and built a new Horse Shed. They removed paths, shrubs, and hedges in the Mansion lawn and Terrace Gardens, and added new foundation shrubs around the Mansion, thus giving the landscape a spacious and manicured character. During the 1960s, the Rockefellers continued to refine the landscape by building a terrace around the pool, adding rock gardens and a putting green, and improving the forested Hillside Gardens,

where they both loved to walk. Over the years, external conditions required the Rockefellers to make further changes in the landscape for privacy, security, and access, in response to the growth of tourism in Woodstock and notably following opening of the Billings Farm & Museum in 1983.

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, the professionals upon whom the Rockefellers had relied to care for the landscape were passing away, and the Rockefellers were themselves advancing in age. They therefore decided to take action on their long-envisioned plans to conserve the Mansion grounds and Mount Tom forest, building upon the success of the Billings Farm & Museum. About 1990, the Rockefellers decided to give the Mansion grounds and the larger 550-acre property that included the Mount Tom forests to the people of the United States as a National Park to illustrate the history of conservation and the evolving nature of land stewardship in America, based on the lives and work of George Perkins Marsh, Frederick Billings, and the Billings heirs. The park was intended to express Laurance Rockefeller's concept of conservation stewardship. Working in cooperation with the Billings Farm & Museum, which would remain owned and operated by the Woodstock Foundation while included within park boundaries, the park would also serve as a vital resource for the community's tourism economy and a cultural complement to the Woodstock Inn & Resort. The Rockefellers hoped that the Mansion grounds, which for the first time in many decades would be open to the public, would play a central role in the success of the new park.

Following the passage of legislation in 1992 establishing Marsh-Billings National Historical Park, the Rockefellers continued their life estate at the Mansion grounds until 1997, the year of Mary's death. During these five years, they played an active role, paying particular attention to how the Mansion grounds would be presented to the public by suggesting improvements and making adjustments to enhance its beauty and historic character. As they left it, the well-tended Mansion grounds landscape still reflected Frederick Billings's pastoral intent for it to be a model country place together with the adjoining farm and forest. The lawns,



Figure 6.36: Aerial view looking north over the Mansion grounds toward the end of the Rockefellers' life estate, 1994. Aero-Photo, Inc., Wareham, Massachusetts.

specimen trees, gardens, and gravel drives surrounding Mansion, Carriage Barn, and Belvedere, adjoining the hill's lush evergreen and deciduous forest made up of mature plantations, rustic botanical gardens, and carriage roads, also told a story of more than a hundred years of stewardship by the Billings and Rockefeller families, during which time the American conservation movement took shape and matured. [Figure 6.36]



## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> The narrative of the Rockefeller period through the creation of Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park was developed with the assistance of David A. Donath, President of The Woodstock Foundation, Inc., in March 2003. Although Laurance Rockefeller was not personally available for interview, his associates in Woodstock and New York provided information and consulted with him about the text. His and Mary Rockefeller's personal records that may pertain to the history of the Mansion grounds may be held in the Rockefeller Family Archives, in Tarrytown, New York, but these materials were not available for research undertaken for this project prior to 2003 due to the regulations restricting access to the records of living members of the family (Mr. Rockefeller died in 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Robin W. Winks, *Laurance S. Rockefeller: Catalyst for Conservation* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1997), 22-23. This is the report's principal published source of information on LSR's life and work.

<sup>3</sup> Donath, March 2003.

<sup>4</sup> David A. Donath, "Legacy of Stewardship" (Introductory Exhibit Narrative, Billings Farm & Museum, 7 August 1998), 17, Billings Farm & Museum Library [hereafter, "BFM"].

<sup>5</sup> Winks, 38.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Winks, 1, 2.

<sup>7</sup> Donath, March 2003.

<sup>8</sup> Winks, 64, 194; H. Eliot Foulds, Kathryn Lacy, and Lauren Meier, "Land Use History: Marsh-Billings National Historical Park" (Boston: National Park Service Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, 1994), 14.

<sup>9</sup> Winks, 59-60.

<sup>10</sup> Winks, 106.

<sup>11</sup> Winks, 204.

<sup>12</sup> LSR once wrote, "Beauty must be a fact of life." Winks, 195.

<sup>13</sup> David Donath, referenced in Foulds, et al, "Land Use History," 16.

<sup>14</sup> Hoping to stimulate economic growth, the State adopted the slogan "Vermont-The Beckoning Country," but by 1968 the rate of growth had become so controversial that it

changed its slogan to "Vermont-A Special World." Donath, March 2003.

<sup>15</sup> Peter S. Jennison, *The History of Woodstock, 1890-1983* (Woodstock: Published for the Woodstock Foundation by the Countryman Press, 1985), 259-60.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Jennison, 254.

<sup>17</sup> Donath, March 2003.

<sup>18</sup> Jennison, 48.

<sup>19</sup> The Woodstock Foundation, Inc. Articles of Incorporation, 2 August 1968; rev. 31 January 1997, BFM.

<sup>20</sup> Sarah Wilcke et al, "Cultural Landscape Report for the Forest at Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park" (Burlington: University of Vermont and the National Park Service, 2000), 86.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Jennison, 275-76. LSR's memorandum was read into the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of The Woodstock Foundation, 22 October 1977; Donath, March 2003.

<sup>22</sup> Donath, 18-19.

<sup>23</sup> The first director of the Vermont Folklife Research Project was Scott E. Hastings, Jr. Donath, March 2003.

<sup>24</sup> The Woodstock Foundation, Inc. [Scott E. Hastings, Jr.], "Vermont Folklife Research Project" (briefing report, November 1975), BFM.

<sup>25</sup> Between 1975 and 1982, the Foundation sought the advice of Minor Wine Thomas, Louis C. Jones, Nancy Hanks, John W. Harbour, Carlisle H. Humelsine, and others in assessing the feasibility and determining the form of the Billings Farm & Museum. Donath, March 2003.

<sup>26</sup> LSR quoted in Jennison, 34.

<sup>27</sup> The Woodstock Foundation, "Long-Range Plan for the Billings Farm & Museum," 1987, BFM; David A. Donath, "Folklore, Folklife, and the New Rural History: The Billings Farm & Museum," Paper delivered at the Annual Meeting of ALHFAM [Association for Living History, Farm & Agricultural Museums], 1989, BFM.

<sup>28</sup> Mary F. Rockefeller, Laurance S. Rockefeller, and David A. Donath, Remarks at the Public Forum, Woodstock Town Hall (unpublished manuscripts, 12 August 1991), BFM; Woodstock Foundation, "Marsh-Billings National Historical Park: A Summary of the Proposal" (handout, 12 August 1991), BFM.

<sup>29</sup> LSR and MFR, Senate Testimony, 26 March 1992; House of Representatives, 27 May 1992; Public Law 102-350:

Marsh-Billings National Historical Park Establishment Act, 102nd Congress S.2079, 26 August 1992. After the death of Mary French Rockefeller, Congress added the Rockefeller name to the official designation of the park (Sec. 143 of FY99 Omnibus Budget Bill).

<sup>30</sup> Final drafts of these documents are in the files of the Woodstock Foundation, dated 21 December 1992. They were signed at the end of the year, with deeds recorded, and delivered to the Secretary of the Interior on January 11, 1993, as follows: LSR and MFR to the United States, Donative Deed; LSR to the United States, Scenic Easements; LSR to the Woodstock Foundation, Pledge to Establish an Endowment Fund; LSR and MFR to Manuel Lujan, Pledge of Gift of Tangible Property. LSR's and MFR's pledge for an in-lieu tax fund is in a letter to Philip Swanson, dated 27 May 1993. Donath, March 2003.

<sup>31</sup> Polly Hitchcock Bigham, interview by John Auwaerter, 22 May 2001, Woodstock; Connie Hitchcock, interview by John Auwaerter, 27 June 2001, Woodstock. Mary French Rockefeller remained the legal owner of the Mansion grounds until the property was gifted to the United States in 1993.

<sup>32</sup> Connie Hitchcock, 2001; Mimi Bergstrom (widow of head gardener Carl Bergstrom), interview by John Auwaerter, 27 June 2001, Woodstock.

<sup>33</sup> Laurance S. Rockefeller, opening remarks in "Conservation Stewardship Workshop: Findings and Recommendations" (Proceedings of a workshop held at Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, Woodstock, 20-21 November 1993), 3.

<sup>34</sup> Mimi Bergstrom, 2001; Roy Thomas (Owner of Resortscapes, Inc. and former employee of Rockresorts), interview by John Auwaerter, 18 December 2000, Woodstock.

<sup>35</sup> Helen Muller (widow of Theodor Muller), interview by John Auwaerter, 8 August 2001, telephone.

<sup>36</sup> Nadia Schreiber Smith (daughter of Zenon Schreiber), interview by John Auwaerter, 8 August 2001, telephone.

<sup>37</sup> Elaine B. Steiner, "Gardens: Taming a Wild Landscape: Rock Outcroppings Caparisoned in Flowers," *Architectural Digest*, vol. 40, no. 9 (September 1983), 140; Nadia Schreiber Smith, 2001.

<sup>38</sup> Photograph of Connie and Polly Hitchcock in front of

white-trimmed, red brick Mansion, dated 1957, Liz Hitchcock album, courtesy Polly Hitchcock Bigham, Evansville, Indiana.

<sup>39</sup> Theodor Muller, "Memorandum: On the Billings Mansion" (unpublished paper, 18 September 1978), 1, Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park Library [hereafter, "MABI"].

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Edward Williams, surveyor, "Contours on Property of Mary French Rockefeller" (29 December 1956), Billings Family Archives [hereafter, "BFA"]; Photograph of Connie and Polly Hitchcock in front of Mansion, dated 1957, Liz Hitchcock album.

<sup>42</sup> Zenon Schreiber designed not only rock gardens, but also a full range of landscape work. Nadia Schreiber Smith, 2001. Schreiber is the only landscape designer of record working at the Mansion grounds during this time, although Carl Bergstrom may have assisted with planting design.

<sup>43</sup> Mimi Bergstrom, 2001. One tree was a gift. In 1959 on their 25th wedding anniversary, the Rockefellers received a silver maple from Mary's brother, John French, and his wife Eleanor. The Rockefellers planted this tree on the hillside above the parking area. Janet Houghton, personal communication with John Auwaerter, 29 August 2001. A plaque was given along with this tree and is now in the park's collections.

<sup>44</sup> Photograph of the Mansion from across the farm, c. 1960, P22, BFA; Mimi Bergstrom, 2001.

<sup>45</sup> Mimi Bergstrom, 2001; photograph of Mansion without foundation plantings in 1958 entries of Mansion Guest Book; Photograph of plantings on south side of mansion dated April 1959, collection of Mimi Bergstrom, Woodstock.

<sup>46</sup> Mimi Bergstrom, 2001.

<sup>47</sup> Photograph of the greenhouse and Garden Workshop, c. 1958 (before pool renovation), Liz Hitchcock album.

<sup>48</sup> Muller, "Memorandum," 3.

<sup>49</sup> Photograph of the Belvedere under renovation dated April 1959, collection of Mimi Bergstrom, Woodstock; photograph of completed Belvedere and initial improvements to pool dated October 1959, P22, BFA.

<sup>50</sup> Muller, "Memorandum," 3.

<sup>51</sup> Theodor Muller, "Belvedere-Pool Entourage in Collaboration with Zenon Schreiber," 2 December 1957, revised 18 January 1958, BFA.

<sup>52</sup> Aerial photograph of the Mansion lawn, c. December 1956, 94.100.0189, Woodstock Historical Society.

<sup>53</sup> Aerial photograph dated 1955-59, BFA; Muller, "Memorandum," 3; photograph of established Flower Garden, December 1964, P22, BFA.

<sup>54</sup> Mimi Bergstrom, 2001; Photograph of cutting garden with crabapple trees dated February 1962, collection of Mimi Bergstrom, Woodstock.

<sup>55</sup> Janet Houghton, "Stone Shed [Garden Shed]: History of Construction and Alteration" (Unpublished paper, revised March 1994), MABI.

<sup>56</sup> Muller, "Memorandum," 3.

<sup>57</sup> John Wiggin (forest manager for the Woodstock Resort Corporation, as well as for LSR), interview by John Auwaerter, 30 November 2000, telephone.

<sup>58</sup> Mimi Bergstrom, 2001.

<sup>59</sup> Polly Hitchcock Bigham, 2001; Connie Hitchcock, 2001.

<sup>60</sup> Connie Hitchcock, 2001.

<sup>61</sup> Roy Thomas, interview by John Auwaerter, 18 December 2000, Woodstock.

<sup>62</sup> Billings Farm Memo Diary, 1976 & 1977, BFM.

<sup>63</sup> Roy Thomas, 2001; Roy Thomas, telephone interview by John Auwaerter, 20 February 2002.

<sup>64</sup> Receipts from 1960s-1980s, Garden Workshop papers, A32, BFA; Roy Thomas, 2001.

<sup>65</sup> Photograph of the excavation in front lawn of the Mansion and staging along pool and Greenhouse dated February 1962, collection of Mimi Bergstrom, Woodstock; Theodor Muller, Mansion fallout shelter plans (revisions/additions), 22 July 1964, BFA.

<sup>66</sup> Theodor Muller in collaboration with Zenon Schreiber, "Belvedere-Pool Entourage," plan and elevations drawings 723 & 724, dated 30 November 1957, revised 18 January 1958, BFA.

<sup>67</sup> Photograph of wall around pool terrace under construction, Kodak development imprint dated May 1963 (probably taken summer or fall of 1962), collection of Mimi Bergstrom, Woodstock.

<sup>68</sup> North American Rock Garden Society web site, "Part I: Rock and Alpine Gardens" ([www.nargs.org/gardening/](http://www.nargs.org/gardening/)

[rockgardening.html](#), 28 December 2000).

<sup>69</sup> Photograph of wall around pool under construction, c. 1962.

<sup>70</sup> Notes by Muller or Schreiber regarding stone for terrace and steps, not dated, A32, BFA.

<sup>71</sup> Nadia Schreiber Smith, 2001.

<sup>72</sup> Photographs of rock gardens, c. 1980s, collection of Mimi Bergstrom; Primavera proposal for improvement of rock gardens, 9 May 1992, Resortsapes, Inc. files, Woodstock; examination of existing mature plants, August 2001. No record remains of the original rock garden plantings prior to the changes made in 1992.

<sup>73</sup> Janet Houghton, e-mail communication with John Auwaerter, 9 August 2001.

<sup>74</sup> Bill, Zenon Schreiber to Mr. Laurance Rockefeller, 27 December 1979, MABI.

<sup>75</sup> Roy Thomas, 2000.

<sup>76</sup> Receipt, Zenon Schreiber, "Delivery to Woodstock," 17 May 1963; Bill, Zenon Schreiber to Laurance Rockefeller, 27 December 1979; White Flower Farm, Zenon Schreiber to Laurance Rockefeller (c. 1986), A32, BFA.

<sup>77</sup> Roy Thomas, 2000.

<sup>78</sup> Miscellaneous rose orders by Zenon Schreiber, A32, BFA.

<sup>79</sup> Mimi Bergstrom, 2001; this bed was known as "Mary's bed," Roy Thomas, 2001.

<sup>80</sup> Roy Thomas, 2001.

<sup>81</sup> Bartlett Tree Expert Company, "1966 Sprays at the Laurance Rockefeller Estate," A32, BFA.

<sup>82</sup> Roy Thomas, 2001; Bryan J. Lynch, "Proposed Drainage Improvements / The Mansion," 18 September 1981. The elm off the southeast corner of the verandah is crossed out on this plan, indicating its removal after 1981.

<sup>83</sup> Roy Thomas, 2001; Connie Hitchcock Bigham, 2001; Kim Murray (Horticulturist, Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, and former staff, Woodstock Resort Corporation and Skyline Nursery, interview by John Auwaerter, 21 May 2001, Woodstock; Bryan J. Lynch, "Proposed Screen Planting," 27 July 1971, MABI.

<sup>84</sup> Records of Harvard University Design School alumni office, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

<sup>85</sup> Ann Lynch (widow of Bryan Lynch), interview with John Auwaerter, 7 June 2001, telephone.

- <sup>86</sup> Bradley S. Klein, "Robert Trent Jones, Sr. Golf Course Architect, Golfonline (www.golfonline.com, 13 August 2001), 1, 3.
- <sup>87</sup> Mansion Guest Book, June 1962, 19-21 July 1963, 23-24 October 1965, 6 October 1968, MABI; Jennison, 239.
- <sup>88</sup> Joe Fitzgerald, Coral Ridge Country Club, telephone interview by John Auwaerter, 5 November 2001. The papers of Robert Trent Jones are kept at the Coral Ridge Country Club in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, under the supervision of Joe Fitzgerald. According to Mr. Fitzgerald, the Mansion grounds putting green was designed by Jones and built in 1969 under the direction of Bill Baldwin, Jones's lead on the Woodstock Country Club course remodeling. See also Robert Trent Jones, Inc., "Lawn Irrigation As-Built" 7 June 1976, MABI. This plan documents the existence of the putting green.
- <sup>89</sup> Robert Trent Jones, Inc., "Lawn Irrigation As-Built" 7 June 1976, MABI. The plan was built in 1976 by the firm of Chester Drake Sons, Inc. of Framingham, Massachusetts.
- <sup>90</sup> Photograph from Mansion toward Elm Street Bridge, May 1977, P22, BFA. This vista subsequently disappeared with the growth of the new hemlock plantings.
- <sup>91</sup> Janet Houghton, e-mail communication with John Auwaerter, 6 February 2002.
- <sup>92</sup> Bryan J. Lynch, "Scheme 2-A Secondary Entrance Drive" (28 July 1978, as-built), MABI.
- <sup>93</sup> Janet Houghton, e-mail communication with John Auwaerter, 6 February 2002.
- <sup>94</sup> In 1976, the Rockefellers had a design produced for a "grotto garage," which they did not implement. The existing garage was probably built soon after. Helmer, Charles Hood, Architects and Associates, Woodstock. "Proposed Grotto Garage for L.S. Rockefeller House." Plan, section, and elevations. 22 June 1976, BFA.
- <sup>95</sup> Roy Thomas, 2001.
- <sup>96</sup> Kim Murray, 2001.
- <sup>97</sup> Wheel-Gersztovf Associates, Inc., Lighting Designers. "Rockefeller Residence / Woodstock, VT / Buildings and Grounds / Security Lighting." 3 sheets, labeled project 4346.84, 7 May 1984, MABI.
- <sup>98</sup> Connie Hitchcock, 2001.
- <sup>99</sup> Assessment records for Mary Rockefeller, Stable, Sheet 5 of 7 dated 31 January 1968, Woodstock Town Lister's Office. The photograph on the assessment record, taken 21 December 1967, shows Flicka's fence.
- <sup>100</sup> Photograph of Upper Meadow, c.1964, P22, BFA.
- <sup>101</sup> Roy Thomas, 2001; Janet Houghton, e-mail communication with John Auwaerter, 4 February 2002.
- <sup>102</sup> Nadia Schreiber Smith, 2001.
- <sup>103</sup> Zenon Schreiber continued to work on the Hillside Gardens into the late 1980s, although he had retired earlier in the decade. Nadia Schreiber Smith, 2001. Carl Bergstrom retired in 1991, but worked on the Hillside Gardens until his death in 1997.
- <sup>104</sup> In the concrete of the uppermost pool is inscribed "Z.S. 1967"; the third pool from the top reads "Z.S. 1966"; the bottom pool reads "Z.S. 1969." There is no date inscribed in the second pool from the top.
- <sup>105</sup> Since no photographs or surveys of the garden were made prior to Schreiber's work, it is not known exactly what changes he made to the Fernery.
- <sup>106</sup> Inspection of plants surviving in 2001.
- <sup>107</sup> Inspection of plants surviving in 2001.
- <sup>108</sup> Mimi Bergstrom, 2001.
- <sup>109</sup> Woodstock Inn, "Vermont Woodland Flora Exhibit" (color brochure, 1980), courtesy of John Wiggin, White River Junction, Vermont.
- <sup>110</sup> John Wiggin, interview by John Auwaerter, 30 November 2000, telephone; Kim Murray, 2001.
- <sup>111</sup> Thelma Hewitt to Roy Thomas, 5 January 1994, personal collection of John Wiggin, White River Junction, Vermont.
- <sup>112</sup> Memorandum, Roy G. Thomas, to Chet Williamson (President, Woodstock Resort Corporation), 11 January 1993, personal collection of John Wiggin.
- <sup>113</sup> David A. Donath, 2002.
- <sup>114</sup> Draft General Management Plan / Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, Billings Farm & Museum, and National Park Service-Boston Support Office, April 1998) [hereafter, DGMP]. 6.
- <sup>115</sup> Mimi Bergstrom, interview by John Auwaerter, 27 June 2001, Woodstock.
- <sup>116</sup> Kim Murray, 2002.
- <sup>117</sup> Roy Thomas (Resortscapes, Inc.), memorandum to Chet Williamson (WRC), 13 May 1992, Resortscapes Inc. files, Woodstock.
- <sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>119</sup> Proposal, Thomas de Giacomo and Jill Anderson (Primavera) to Roy Thomas (Resortscapes) and Philip Lewis (WRC), 9 May 1992, Resortscapes, Inc. files, Woodstock.

<sup>120</sup> Roy Thomas, list of plants added to the Mansion since 1992, memo dated June 2001, MABI; Roy Thomas to Phil Lewis, memorandum, 12 June 1992, Resortscapes, Inc. files; receipts, French's to the Estate of Laurance Rockefeller, 29 September 1992, 21 July 1995, Resortscapes, Inc. files; Roy Thomas, 2000.

<sup>121</sup> Kim Murray, 2001; Roy Thomas, 2001.

<sup>122</sup> Aero-Photo, aerial view of the Mansion grounds, 1994, MABI.

<sup>123</sup> Kim Murray, 2001; Roy Thomas, 2000.

<sup>124</sup> Robert A. White, ASLA, "Alternative Access Planning for Visitors to the Marsh-Billings National Historic Site" (unpublished analysis, 9 October 1993), MABI.

<sup>125</sup> Roy Thomas, 2000.

<sup>126</sup> Donath, March 2003.

<sup>127</sup> DGMP, 6.



# Cultural Landscape Report for the Mansion Grounds

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park

## Rockefeller Era 1954-1997



### National Park Service Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation

99 Warren Street, Brookline, MA  
in cooperation with:

Faculty of Landscape Architecture  
SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry  
Syracuse, New York

### SOURCES

Contours on Property of Mary F. Rockefeller (Williams, 1956)  
Topo. Plan Mansion Grounds (Bruno, 2001)

### DRAWN BY

John Auwaerter  
Illustrator 10, 2004

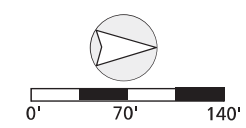
### LEGEND

- Added during period
- Assumed feature
- Removed during period
- 10' contour
- Intermittent stream
- Deciduous woods
- Coniferous woods
- Conifer tree/shrub
- Deciduous tree/shrub
- Herbaceous bed
- Unpaved road/path
- Paved road/path
- Rock outcropping
- Stone wall
- Fence/gate
- Hydrant
- Lamppost
- Bench

### NOTES

All vegetation shown in approximate scale and location.  
Names indicated are those used during the period, when known.  
Plan illustrates conditions in 1997.

Figure 6.37



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## AFTERWORD: NATIONAL PARK SERVICE STEWARDSHIP

As the National Park Service prepared to assume its role as public steward of the Mansion grounds and forest, Mary and Laurance Rockefeller planned for the conclusion of their life estate at the end of 1997, intending to participate personally in the opening of the park to the public in 1998. The transition to National Park Service operation marked the end of an era of private stewardship that had reflected important ideals in American conservation for over two hundred years, but it also offered new opportunities. Expanding upon its legislative mandate, the park would illustrate the intertwining of the human stories and natural history of a place where the history and future of American conservation came together in the same landscape.<sup>1</sup> In his introductory remarks at a planning workshop in 1993, Laurance S. Rockefeller (LSR) challenged the park to fulfill this expanded role:

*The true importance of Marsh, Billings, and those who follow in their footsteps, goes beyond simple stewardship. Their work transcends maintenance. It involves new thought and new action to enhance and enrich and even repair errors of the past. This may be the real importance of what we can be taught and learn at Marsh-Billings [National Historical Park]. We cannot rest on the achievements of the past. Rather, each generation must not only be stewards, but activists, innovators, and enrichers.<sup>2</sup>*

### PARK LEGISLATION AND PLANNING, 1992-1998 <sup>3</sup>

Federal legislation establishing Marsh-Billings National Historical Park was signed into law on August 26, 1992.<sup>4</sup> The enabling legislation established the following purposes of the park:

*To interpret the history and evolution of conservation stewardship in America;*

*To recognize and interpret the contributions and birthplace of George Perkins Marsh, pioneering environmentalist, author of *Man and Nature*, statesman, lawyer, and linguist;*

*To recognize and interpret the contributions of Frederick Billings, conservationist, pioneer in reforestation and scientific farm management, lawyer, philanthropist, and railroad builder, who extended principles of land management introduced by Marsh;*

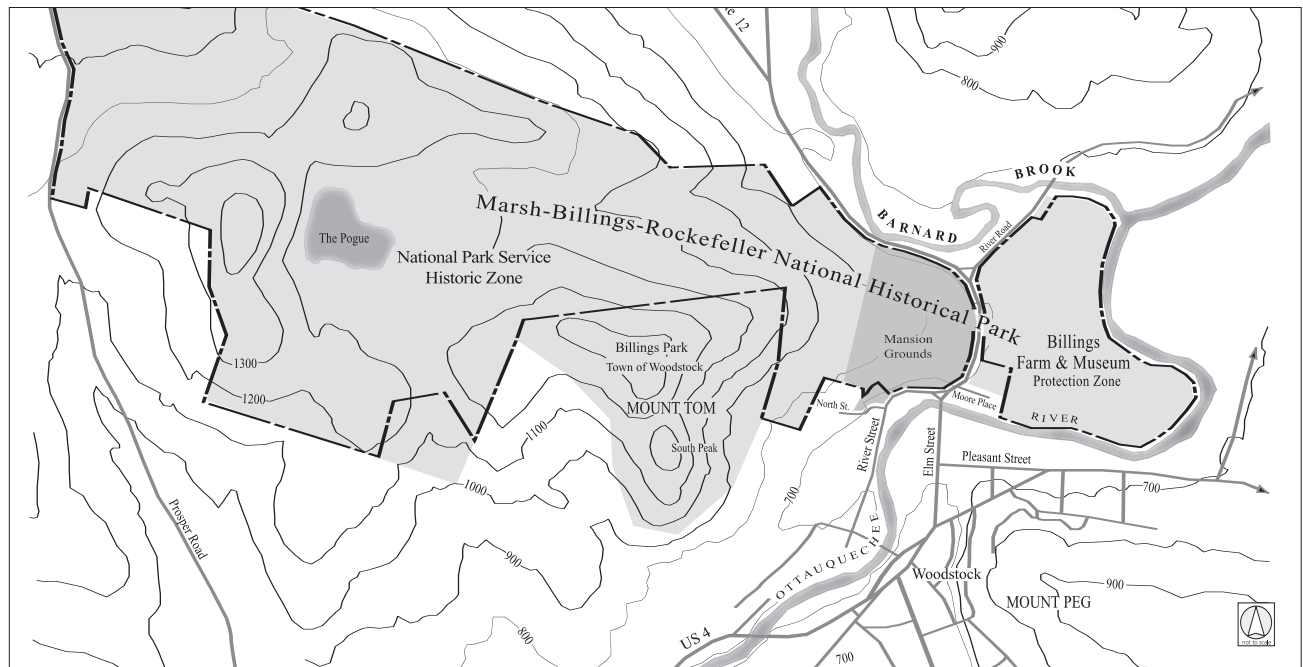
*To preserve the Marsh-Billings Mansion and its surrounding lands; and*

*To recognize the significant contributions of Julia Billings, Mary Billings French, Mary French Rockefeller, and Laurance Spelman Rockefeller in perpetuating the Marsh-Billings heritage.<sup>5</sup>*

Marsh-Billings was designated a National Historical Park, rather than a National Historic Site or other type of park unit, because it included multiple properties within its boundaries, both public and private.<sup>6</sup> As established in the 1992 enabling legislation, park boundaries included the core of the historic Billings Estate, incorporating the Mansion and nearly all of its grounds, much of the Mount Tom forests, and a large part of Billings Farm & Museum. [Figure 7.1]

Responsibility for the Rockefeller's 555-acre gift to the United States encompassing the Mansion grounds and Mount Tom forest, identified as the park's "Historic Zone," belonged to the National Park Service.<sup>7</sup> Forming the core of the park, the primary purpose of this zone was "preservation, education, and interpretation." The eighty-eight acres of the Billings Farm & Museum remained under private ownership and operation by The Woodstock Foundation, Inc., the non-profit organization established by LSR in 1968. This land was designated the "Protection Zone" of the park, an area "intended to preserve the historic setting across from the Marsh-Billings Mansion [permitting] current and future compatible uses." In addition to the core Historic and Protection Zones, a "Scenic Zone," on two parcels of land in the viewshed of the Mansion, but not within the park boundaries, was established with scenic easements donated to the United States by LSR. Including approximately three hundred acres of privately owned land on Blake Hill and Mount Peg, the easements were intended to "protect portions of the natu-





**Figure 7.1: Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park boundaries and surrounding properties. SUNY ESF. Property formerly part of Mary Montagu Billings French's estate prior to its division in 1954 is shown in light gray, the Mansion grounds in dark gray.**

ral setting beyond park boundaries that are visible from the Marsh-Billings Mansion [permitting] current and compatible future uses.”<sup>8</sup>

Soon after the 1992 legislation was passed, the National Park Service began preparation of a General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement intended to guide park development and operations. To assist the National Park Service in moving forward with its planning process, LSR agreed to fund half of its estimated \$400,000 cost on a matching basis, and the Woodstock Foundation actively helped to facilitate it.<sup>9</sup> The process, intended to articulate the program and operation of the park and the needs of the community, involved numerous local individuals, community groups, and organizations in the development of a plan for the park. The effort included thematic workshops and focus group meetings, designation of community liaisons, community surveys, newsletters, and consultation with state and local government officials and nonprofit organizations.<sup>10</sup> After five years of work, the results of the planning effort were published in April 1998

in the park's “Draft General Management Plan / Draft Environmental Impact Statement.” The report described the conditions and experiences that should exist at the park for fifteen to twenty years into the future.<sup>11</sup>

As the park prepared for its opening to the public in June 1998, it began to implement the recommendations of its planning process. The park would operate in a cooperative working relationship between the National Park Service and the Woodstock Foundation. Visitor parking and initial orientation to the park would be provided at the Foundation's Billings Farm & Museum visitor reception facilities. The National Park Service would manage the 555 acres on the west side of Route 12 encompassing the Mansion grounds and Mount Tom forest, where it would rehabilitate the Carriage Barn as park headquarters and a visitor center. Although the primary residential use of the Mansion grounds would be replaced with educational and interpretive uses under public stewardship, the rest of the property would continue to be maintained as it had been for over 130 years. The National Park Service would continue to manage the historic forest stands in part as a working landscape, and the recreational access to Mount Tom that the public had long enjoyed would be continued. The park would be interpreted to reflect over two hundred years of stewardship, including changes through the Rockefellers'

tenure, thereby reflecting a long continuum of conservation practice rather than a single period in history.

Maintenance of the park landscape and the Mansion grounds in particular would focus on rehabilitation, a treatment allowing for compatible contemporary uses through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving features that convey the property's historic significance.<sup>12</sup> Preservation of the park's historic resources would remain a top priority for park management, consistent with the mandate of the park's enabling legislation and the recommendations of the park planning process. The importance of preservation was also reflected in the Mansion grounds' long-standing status, both as an individual National Historic Landmark (George Perkins Marsh Boyhood Home), and as a contributing component of the Woodstock Village Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places.<sup>13</sup>

Within the Mansion grounds, planned uses included visitor services and programs (guided tours, conservation exhibits, interpretive features), resource protection and forestry stewardship (care of historic buildings and landscape features), management and administration (including stewardship research and planning), and maintenance and facility operations (lawn mowing, annual planting, etc.).<sup>14</sup> In addition to direct park operations, the Mansion grounds would become home to the National Park Service's Conservation Study Institute, established to enhance leadership in the field of conservation. The Vermont-New Hampshire regional office of the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program would also be housed at the park.

### **REHABILITATION OF THE MANSION GROUNDS FOR PUBLIC USE**

Even though the Rockefellers might have been willing to make some substantial changes to the Mansion grounds—even including restoration of some lost features—the National Park Service planned to preserve the landscape as it had developed through the Rockefellers' tenure. The park's General Management Plan outlined it thus:

*Because the buildings and cultural features of Marsh-Billings National Historical Park were developed and altered during nearly two centuries of historically significant occupancy, the complex [Mansion grounds] will be managed to convey a sense of the site's evolution through the occupancy of the Marsh, Billings, and Rockefeller families, rather than depicting any particular period in their history. Historical changes to the buildings and features will be retained, and visitors will experience the residential complex largely as it appears today.<sup>15</sup>*

Transferred to the National Park Service in excellent condition, the Mansion grounds required few modifications in preparation for opening of the park, which occurred in June 1998, only six months after Laurance Rockefeller had transferred physical possession of the property. Over the next two years, the National Park Service made some small changes and additions to meet the basic needs of the visiting public. These included the addition of several benches, plant labels in the Flower Garden, directional signs along the drives, and lights set on turned wood posts reminiscent of those erected by the Rockefellers. [Figure 7.2] A fenced-in dog run at the back of the Mansion, added in c. 1990 as a temporary feature for the Rockefellers' elderly black Labrador Retriever and a young puppy, was removed and replaced under the direction of Roy Thomas with understory plantings, including rhododendron and laurel.<sup>16</sup> Along the steps leading up to the Flower Garden and pool, inconspicuous handrails, modeled after those around the pool terrace, were installed to address public safety.<sup>17</sup>

The park also planned for the impact of public visitation on the historic landscape of the Mansion grounds, which during the year 2000 amounted to about 15,000 visitors.<sup>18</sup> As identified in the General Management Plan, this impact would be limited by providing access only through guided tours. As implemented, visitors enter the grounds by foot from Billings Farm & Museum via the Secondary Entrance Drive, and then begin guided tours from the Carriage Barn visitor center. From here, tours proceed to the Mansion lawn to take in the east view, and then enter the Mansion. Upon exit from the Mansion, visitors are led to the Terrace



Figure 7.2: Typical lamp and sign erected by the National Park Service on the Mansion grounds. SUNY ESF, 2001.

Gardens, up the pool terrace steps past the Belvedere, and then return to the Carriage Barn. For reasons of accessibility and potential impact to the fragile landscape, the Hillside Gardens are not included in regular tours of the grounds. Other than the Mansion, Carriage Barn, and Belvedere, other historic buildings on the grounds are normally not open to the public. Many of these still serve their historic uses. The Double Cottage and rear wing of the Mansion continue to be staff residences as they were under the Rockefellers; and the Garden Workshop and greenhouse are still used by the grounds staff. The Bungalow, located on the wooded hillside, is reserved for special meetings and workshops. The north slope of the hill bordering the Woodshed and main carriage road, along with the rest of the Mount Tom forest, remains open for free public access as it has been since Frederick Billings's time.

Following its public opening, the park's most pressing needs were for a visitor center and park offices. The park's General Management Plan identified that rehabilitation of the Carriage Barn could accommodate these uses with

only minimal impact to the landscape. Plans called for retaining much of the building's interior fabric and little perceptible alteration to the exterior. [Figure 7.3] Designed by National Park Service architects Paul Newman and Leslie Ullman, the Carriage Barn rehabilitation provided public rest rooms and an orientation area, offices, meeting rooms, storage space, and a library. A new exhibit, "Celebrating Stewardship: People Taking Care of Places," was installed in the renovated building as an orientation to the American conservation movement, with a focus on the history of the Billings Estate and contemporary examples of conservation stewardship that integrate social, cultural, and ecological values.

In the surrounding landscape, a new walkway was built to connect the Secondary Entrance Drive with the front entrance of the Carriage Barn, and the adjoining drive was

Figure 7.3: View of the front of the Carriage Barn following rehabilitation into a visitor center and park offices. Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, 1999. In the foreground is the new stone-paved entranceway.





**Figure 7.4:** From left, Park Superintendent Rolf Diamant, National Park Service Regional Director Marie Rust, Vermont Senator Patrick Leahy, and Laurance S. Rockefeller at the dedication ceremony for the Carriage Barn visitor center and offices, August 7, 1999. Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park 1999 Annual Report.

widened to improve the turn at the back of the building. The walk was paved in native stone and a new stone wall, designed after historic walls on the property, was added to accommodate the widened drive. Completion of the Carriage Barn project in August 1999 reflected significant progress in the development of the park, an occasion marked by an opening ceremony attended by Laurance S. Rockefeller, National Park Service Northeast Regional Director Marie Rust, and Vermont Senator Patrick Leahy. [Figure 7.4] Also in 1999, the park was renamed Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park to honor Laurance Rockefeller's significant contributions to the American conservation movement. The change in name did not result in programmatic changes at the park, since the legislation had already recognized Rockefeller's significance.

Maintenance of the Mansion grounds continued much as it had during the Rockefellers' tenure, although the National Park Service assumed management responsibili-

ties from the Woodstock Resort Corporation (WRC). With the assistance of the Woodstock Foundation, through its dedicated fund for preservation and conservation of park resources that had been established by a gift from Laurance S. Rockefeller, the park retained Roy Thomas's Resortscares firm to conduct and oversee much of the grounds maintenance. Thomas continued the work he had directed since 1992, including the annual design and planting of the flower gardens, replacement of damaged shrubs and other plant material, and

general maintenance advice. He hired an array of subcontractors, including the WRC grounds staff and other local contractors. This decision followed the philosophy of using local services whenever possible, and also retained crews that had experience with the grounds. The park hired Kim Murray, former WRC grounds supervisor, in the position of horticulturist.

Since the Rockefellers had been good stewards of the Mansion grounds, the National Park Service inherited a landscape that had few items requiring immediate repair. One exception was the bench at the end of the Long Terrace; the Rockefellers had rebuilt this seat in 1987, but it had since deteriorated beyond repair. In order to retain this historic feature, the park had a replacement bench fabricated according to the original design by Charles A. Platt. [Figure 7.5] Decline of some of the old trees also posed safety hazards and potential damage to historic buildings, so several were pruned or removed and replaced with the same species in the same location. Another feature that required attention was the 100-year-old hemlock hedge that bordered the Long Terrace. [Figure 7.6] By 1999 it had become overgrown and could no longer be properly sheared. Under the direction of Kim Murray and with the assistance of the National Park Service's Olmsted Center



**Figure 7.5:** The Charles A. Platt-designed bench at the end of the Long Terrace, originally built in c.1899 and reconstructed by the National Park Service in 1999. SUNY ESF, 2000.

for Landscape Preservation, the hedge was replaced in-kind with new hemlocks in the same general location as the old ones.

Although its work on the Mansion grounds emphasized preservation, the National Park Service included the formal

**Figure 7.6:** View west through the Long Terrace toward the Platt bench illustrating shaded and overgrown condition of the hemlock hedges. National Park Service, summer 1994.



landscape in its broader program of conservation stewardship, in particular its Integrated Pest Management program. The Park Service adopted an organic turf-maintenance program, moving away from traditional reliance on chemical pesticides, fertilizers, and weed killers. In the area of lawn care, for example, the park substituted chemical weed killers

with corn gluten, a natural substance with no known adverse side effects. Although results were mixed, the organic turf-management program proved a useful step toward more ecologically sustainable grounds-maintenance practices.<sup>19</sup>

In its first few years of operation, the National Park Service demonstrated its commitment to stewardship of the historic landscape of the Mansion grounds, recognizing its social, cultural, and ecological values. The park introduced public visitation and conservation stewardship programs

in a sensitive manner, began to develop its own sound forest and landscape management practices, and continued to preserve the historic features of the landscape. With funding from the Woodstock Foundation's endowment for preservation and conservation, the park's planning for long-term stewardship of the Mansion grounds includes this Cultural Landscape Report, which documents the history and significance of the landscape and, through subsequent volumes, provides a long-term strategy for its care. This effort, along with a parallel plan being developed for the forest, will address significant long-range challenges to preservation of

the Mansion grounds, which—like all landscapes—are dynamic, due not only to the natural processes of growth and decline, but also to the evolving nature of conservation practice. To meet these challenges, the park cannot freeze the landscape at a certain point in time; rather it must ensure that the long tradition of stewardship and active landscape management practiced by the Marsh, Billings, and Rockefeller families continues.

### SUMMARY CONCLUSION

Situated at the foot of Mount Tom overlooking the broad intervalle of the Ottauquechee River, the Mansion grounds have long been an ideal location for human habitation. Prior to European settlement in the eighteenth century, the area had probably been a forested hunting ground and seasonal camp for the Abenaki people, centered on what may have been an agricultural clearing in the Ottauquechee River floodplain (intervale). In establishing farms and villages and extracting timber and potash, English settlers began to clear the forest. Within a few decades, much of Mount Tom and the surrounding hills and valleys were cleared of their forests, encouraging a cycle of rapid loss of soil cover, erosion, siltation of streams, and environmental degradation.

When Charles Marsh and his family settled at the foot of Mount Tom in 1789, they participated in these changes to the landscape, soon fashioning it into one of the most prominent farms in Woodstock with its Federal-style brick house, built in 1805-1807, overlooking Woodstock village and the Ottauquechee intervalle. This house and surrounding grounds, characteristic of both a farmstead and a village residence with its orthogonal lanes and front garden, formed the core of the landscape that would later become the Mansion grounds. Surrounding the house were stonewall-lined pastures, woodlots, and the fertile intervalle fields. Here, young George Perkins Marsh was raised and gained his earliest experience of nature and the effect of humans upon it. Over the course of a lifetime, Marsh synthesized his observations on nature, its degradation through human action, and the corresponding effects on society in his 1864 landmark treatise, *Man and Nature*,

widely considered the fountainhead of the American conservation movement. The Vermont countryside, plagued by loss of population, overgrazing, and economic decline, reflected Marsh's observations.

George Perkins Marsh's younger brother Charles remained steward of the family farm in Woodstock through the late 1860s, but made few improvements to it. In 1869, he sold the farm to transcontinental businessman Frederick Billings. In purchasing the old Marsh Place, Billings reconnected with his childhood roots in Woodstock while following a growing trend among the industrial elite after the Civil War to establish country places away from the increasingly crowded industrial cities. Frederick Billings did not, however, simply intend to establish a pastoral retreat, but rather to create a model farm based on the tradition of New England gentleman farms and following progressive conservation practices such as those espoused by George Perkins Marsh. Here, Billings offered the farmers of Woodstock and throughout Vermont an example of proper land stewardship, thus helping to improve the economy and—by extension—the landscape of the languishing countryside.

Over the course of two decades, Frederick Billings redeveloped and expanded the Marsh Place. Within the Mansion grounds, he built a fashionable landscape based on a conceptual plan designed in 1869 by Robert Morris Copeland, which reflected the Natural style of landscape gardening as well as progressive scientific farming principles. Billings created a beautiful, idealized rural landscape, with sweeping lawns, curving drives, and distant views across the countryside; as well as a wild and sublime landscape through the use of rustic features and forest plantations. These plantations were not all for show. As a useful agricultural crop, Billings also intended them as a conservation measure to address not only environmental problems, but also social and economic issues in the rural community. By the time of his death in 1890, Frederick Billings had reforested a large portion of the Mansion grounds, as well as other worn-out pastures on the west side of Mount Tom.

Frederick Billings's wife Julia and his daughters Laura, Mary Montagu, and Elizabeth continued to improve the estate as a model farm and the Mansion grounds as a model of landscape beauty. Their additions perpetuated Frederick's concept of conservation and, incorporating progressive neoclassical and Arts and Crafts design, illustrated the family's artistic and cultural background through the work of prominent landscape architects—including Charles A. Platt, Martha Brookes Brown Hutcheson, and Ellen Biddle Shipman—at the very beginning of their careers. Platt's Neoclassical-style Terrace Gardens, designed in 1894 and his third known landscape design, was the most outstanding of the additions to the Mansion grounds. Complementing the formal landscape were Elizabeth Billings's wild gardens on the hillside beneath her father's forest plantations. Begun during the late nineteenth century, these gardens reflected the family's interest in Arts and Crafts design and in conservation of wild flora.

Through the twentieth century, Frederick Billings's heirs proved to be good stewards of the Mansion grounds and the larger estate including the Billings Farm and the Mount Tom forest, ensuring that this desirable landscape at the very edge of Woodstock village would be preserved for future generations. Their stewardship weathered fluctuations in family dynamics and finances, varying tastes in architecture and landscape architecture, Woodstock's changing economy and land-use patterns, and evolving conservation practices. After a period of hardship during the Great Depression, the Mansion grounds were revived, beginning in the 1950s, by Frederick Billings's granddaughter, Mary French Rockefeller and her husband, Laurance S. Rockefeller. As the most recent stewards of the landscape, the Rockefellers' improvements remain the most intact. Aside from the addition of the pool terrace and adjoining putting green and rock gardens, the Rockefellers' improvements were mostly modifications to existing features, which preserved much of the landscape's historic character and, thus, its continuity with the past.

In the spirit of Frederick Billings's model farm, the Rockefellers applied their conservation vision not only

to the Billings Estate, but also to the broader environment of Woodstock and central Vermont. This vision led to the establishment of Billings Farm & Museum in 1983 and Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park in 1992. Together with the Woodstock Inn & Resort and the Woodstock Foundation, these institutions would protect the natural environment and historic character of Woodstock and help ensure the community's economic vitality.

Today, as a centerpiece of Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, the Mansion grounds provide tangible evidence of the history of conservation and the evolving nature of land stewardship in the United States. Neither completely natural nor completely “manmade,” the landscape illustrates the intertwining of human stories and natural history.<sup>20</sup> As the National Park Service prepares for the future of the Mansion grounds, it will continue the family tradition of conservation stewardship while preserving the landscape with a new focus on public interpretation and education.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> John Elder, remarks at the opening of the Park, 5 June 1998, quoted in *A National Park and a Vision of Conservation Stewardship: Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park: 1999 Annual Report* (July 2000), 4.

<sup>2</sup> Laurance S. Rockefeller, opening remarks at the Conservation Stewardship Workshop for Marsh-Billings National Historical Park, Woodstock, 20 November 1993. LSR and MFR excused themselves from the two-day workshop following the introduction.

<sup>3</sup> The narrative of planning for Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park was developed with the assistance of David A. Donath, President of The Woodstock Foundation, Inc. Although Laurance Rockefeller was not personally available for interview, his associates in Woodstock and New York provided much information and consulted with him about the text.

<sup>4</sup> Public Law 102-350: Marsh-Billings National Historical Park Establishment Act, 102nd Congress S.2079, 26 August 1992.

<sup>5</sup> Congressional Record-Senate, 6 August 1992.

<sup>6</sup> National Park Service, “Designation of National Park System Units,” <http://www.nps.gov/legacy/nomenclature.html>, 28 March 2000.

<sup>7</sup> Mary French Rockefeller owned seventy-eight acres including the Mansion grounds. Laurance Rockefeller had acquired much of the forest acreage from Billings Farm, Inc. in 1974. About a year after the designation of the park, LSR acquired a remaining parcel from the estate of Mrs. John French, Mary’s sister-in-law, to complete the 555-acre donation to the United States.

<sup>8</sup> Language regarding the purposes and restrictions of the zones is part of the park’s legislation, Public Law 102-350.

<sup>9</sup> Prior to enactment of park legislation, LSR pledged to match 50 percent of the cost of the GMP/EIS process, up to \$200,000, to expedite its prompt completion—see Laurance S. Rockefeller to Sen. Leahy, Sen. Jeffords, and Rep. Sanders, 21 November 1991. Executive Director (later President) David Donath of the Woodstock Foundation served on the General Management Plan team, providing a liaison between LSR and the National Park Service (NPS) planners. Because of this collaboration, the Billings Farm & Museum was listed as a co publisher of the plan—see Draft General Management Plan / Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, Billings Farm & Museum, and National Park Service-Boston Support Office, April 1998) [hereafter, DGMP].

<sup>10</sup> DGMP, 63-74.

<sup>11</sup> DGMP, facing page 1.

<sup>12</sup> “Standards for Rehabilitation,” in Charles A. Birnbaum and Christine Capella Peters, eds., *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes* (Washington: Department of the Interior, 1996), 48.

<sup>13</sup> In 1998, NPS Director Robert Stanton authorized renaming as the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller Mansion, and accordingly a new National Historic Landmark (NHL) plaque was cast and mounted on the Mansion in time for the park opening. This renaming was intended to be the first step in the process of (1) renaming the NHL, and (2) renaming the park. To date the park has been officially

renamed, but the NHL has not. See NPS Director to MABI Superintendent, 10 February 1998, MABI. Congress confirmed the renaming of the park as part of the FY1999 omnibus budget bill.

<sup>14</sup> 1999 Annual Report, 13.

<sup>15</sup> DGMP, 27.

<sup>16</sup> Roy Thomas, interview by John Auwaerter, 18 December 2000, Woodstock; Janet Houghton, e-mail communication with John Auwaerter, 4 February 2002.

<sup>17</sup> The railings were installed in 2000. Roy Thomas (Resortscapes) “NPS Grounds Maintenance: Midseason Meeting” [internal memorandum] 2 August 2000, 2, Resortscapes, Inc. files.

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior Monthly Public Use Report for Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, December 2000, filed 17 January 2001.

<sup>19</sup> Roy Thomas, NPS Grounds Maintenance: Mid-season Meeting, 2 August 2000. By 2002 the organic turf-management program needed adjustment because it was not adequate for the high standard of turf quality required at the Mansion grounds; more aggressive weed and pest management, and replacement of some degraded turf areas were required.

<sup>20</sup> John Elder, Remarks at the Dedication of Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, 5 June 1998. MABI.





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## REFERENCE LIST

Repository Key:

BFM = Billings Farm & Museum Library, Woodstock,  
Vermont

BFA = Billings Family Archives, housed at Billings Farm &  
Museum, Woodstock, Vermont

MABI = Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical  
Park Library, Woodstock, Vermont

### WRITTEN MATERIAL

#### Primary Unpublished Sources

Aitken, George. Correspondence, 1892-1905? Copies in five binders. George Aitken, as farm manager, was involved in the maintenance of the Mansion grounds, mostly with new construction. His letters to Laura Billings in particular provide information on developments at the Mansion grounds during the 1890s. BFM.

Billings Farm Fiscal Records. January 1881 to December 1899. 34 binders. Collection consists largely of receipts from operation of the farm, but does contain a substantial number of receipts related to maintenance of the Mansion grounds. These latter receipts relate primarily to seed and nursery stock orders, lawn care, clay pots, and greenhouse maintenance. BFM.

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Billings, Frederick, Diaries. Researched 1874 to 1889, with focus on entries in Woodstock and growing/grounds—work season between April and November. These diaries provided the most detailed accounts of landscape changes and maintenance, although the amount of detail that Billings included varied from year to year. BFA, Box A11.

Billings, Frederick. Agricultural Speech at the Windsor County Fair, September 1864. Transcription by Janet Houghton. BFA, Box A23.

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Billings, Julia Parmly. Autobiographical, typed notes through 1908. Unpublished paper, c.1904-1909. Expansion and transcription of "Memorandum of Events in the Life of J. B.," c.1896. Notes are largely social, but there are several remarks about the Mansion grounds. BFA, Box A12.

Billings, Elizabeth, Diaries. Researched 1907-1911, 1912/1913-1917, 1922-1926, with a focus on the months in Woodstock, generally June through early November. As Elizabeth had a keen interest in botany, and was involved in the design and maintenance of gardens on the Mansion grounds, her diaries have much information about the development and use of the landscape. BFA, Box A15.

French, Mary Montagu Billings, Diaries. Researched 1898, 1899, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1934, 1935, 1940, 1943, 1949 with a focus on months in Woodstock, generally June through November. Mary Montagu's diaries provide few details on the landscape. She was apparently less involved in the design and/or maintenance of the Mansion grounds than her sisters Laura and Elizabeth. BFA, Boxes A13, A14.

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folder 36, Charles Marsh to George Perkins Marsh, 22 March 1859; carton 5, folder 45, Charles Marsh to his sister (Caroline Marsh?), 11 June 1869; carton 5, folder 47: Caroline Marsh Crane to George Perkins Marsh, 2 September 1869; carton 6, folder 24: will of Charles Marsh, November 1873; carton 6, folder 36: Frederick Billings to George Perkins Marsh, 3 October 1874; carton 5, folder 46: Charles Marsh to Caroline Crane Marsh, 31 July 1869; carton 7, folder 67, Frederick Billings to Caroline Marsh, 8 November 1882. Bailey-Howe Library, University of Vermont, Burlington; finding guide and copies obtained for Carriage Barn Cultural Landscape Report project, 1998, Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, Brookline, Massachusetts.

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19: Glass Slides: Billings Estate

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P21: Glass Negatives

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P22: Loose Photographs

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P26: Photograph Albums 26, 28, 39.

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P29: Antique Negatives and Contact Prints:

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P35: Loose Photographs, Oversize

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Curator  
Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park  
Woodstock, Vermont

Morgan, Keith  
Professor of Art History, Charles A. Platt biographer  
Boston University  
Boston, Massachusetts

Murray, Kim  
Horticulturist  
Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park  
Woodstock, Vermont

Platt, Charles A.  
Grandson of Charles A. Platt  
Platt Byard Dovell Architects  
New York, New York

Swift, Esther Munroe  
Librarian / Archivist  
Billings Farm & Museum  
Woodstock, Vermont

Tankard, Judith  
Garden historian, Ellen Shipman biographer  
Newton, Massachusetts

## APPENDIX A

“Ode to Connecticut River” by Josias Lyndon Arnold. Originally published in *Poems / by the late Josias Lyndon Arnold, Esquire of St. Johnsbury [Vermont] / Formerly of Providence and a Tutor in Rhode Island College* (Providence: Carter and Wilkinson, 1797). Poem republished in John Walter Coates and Frederick Tupper, editors, *Vermont Verse: An Anthology* (Brattleboro: Stephen Daye Press, c.1932).

*On thy lov'd banks, sweet river, free  
From worldly care and vanity,  
I could my every hour confine,  
And think true happiness was mine.*

*Sweet River, in thy gentle stream  
Myriads of finny beings swim:  
The watchful trout, with speckled hide;  
The perch, the dace in silvered pride;  
The princely salmon, sturgeon brave,  
And lamprey, emblem of the knave.*

*Beneath thy banks, thy shades among,  
The muses, mistresses of song,  
Delight to sit, to tune the lyre,  
And fan the heav'n-descended fire.*

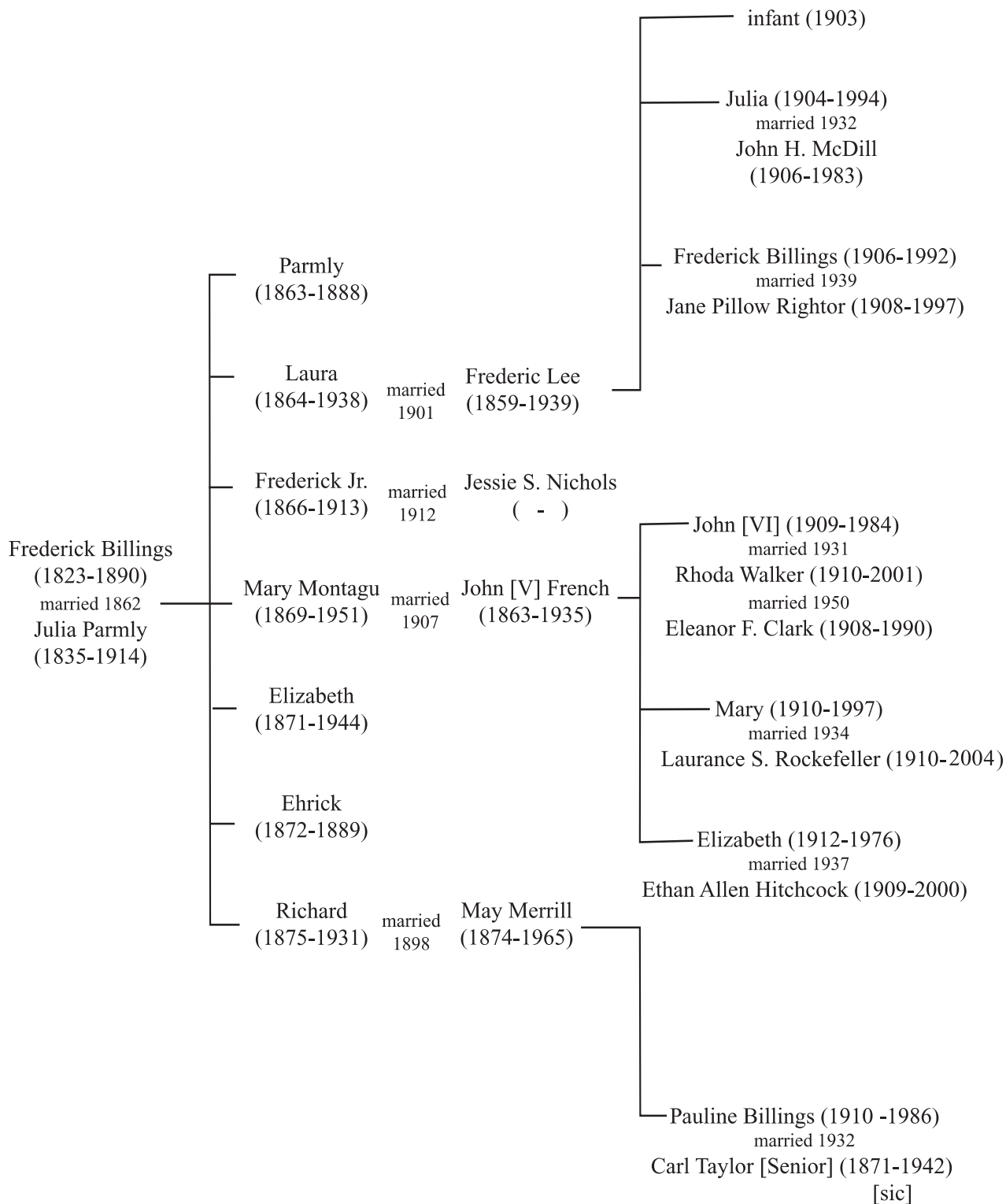
*Happiest of all the happy swains  
Are those who till thy fertile plains;  
With freedom, peace and plenty crown'd,  
They see the varying year go round.*

*But, more than all, there Fanny dwells,  
For whom, departing from their cells,  
The muses wreaths of laurel twine,  
And bind around her brows divine;  
For whom the dryads of the woods,  
For whom the nereides of the floods,  
Those as for Dian fam'd of old,  
These as for Thetis reverence hold;  
With whom, if I could live and die,  
With joy I'd live, and die with joy.*



## APPENDIX B

## Abbreviated Genealogy of the Frederick Billings Family







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## APPENDIX C

### MY FERNERY

*Elizabeth Billings*

[Published in *Vermont Botanical Club Bulletin*, volume 3 (1908), 27-28.]

Under some old red oaks on a rocky eastern slope I have brought together in Woodstock most of our Vermont ferns and a few from other states and foreign lands. Following the inclined path up the hillside before reaching the shade of the oaks are the *Onocleas*. Near this group is a pool into which a stream gushes at regular intervals from an artificial geyser on the level above. A low limestone wall edges this pool and here are the lime-loving ferns, our native *Asplenium Trichomanes* [sic], *Polypodium vulgare*, *Woodsia Ilvensis* [sic], *Camptosorus rhizophyllus*, and flourishing plants of the hartstongue, *Scolopendrium*, some from England and some from New York State, and *Lomaria spicant* from Vancouver. A bank which slopes down to the pool is covered with *Osmunda regalis*, and *Osmunda cinnamomea* and *O. Claytoniana* are planted along the path which winds up the hillside. Next to these are two or three Japanese ferns the survivors of some twenty kinds which I brought from Japan ten years ago. The one which has taken most kindly to Vermont is *Polystichum tripterum* which I found growing up in the mountains in the vicinity of Tokio. Its specific name suggests its form, a central frond with two small ones at the base. The glory of the Fernery is a bank of maidenhair at the foot of an oak tree. Here the path divides to meet above and turning to the right or left, steps lead to an upper basin filled from what appears to be a natural spring bubbling out of the rocks. The circular space between the paths is edged with shield ferns, *Aspidium Filix-mas*, *spinulosum*, *marginale*, *acrostichoides*, *Bootii*, *aculeatum* var. *Braunii*, *Noveboracense*, *Thelypteris*, *cristatum*, its variety *Clintonianum* and *Goldieanum*, while in the center the water trickles over the rocks and gathers in crevices where birds like to take their baths. Around the upper basin are the three species of *Dryopteris* and the two of *Cystopteris*, *Woodwardia Virginica*, a plant of which came from Fort Ethan Allen pond, and *Woodwardia areolata*, which I sent from Aiken, South Carolina, and to my surprise find it hardy in Vermont. Our common brake is planted close by and a few feet away under a chestnut and poplars in [sic] a mass of *Dicksonia*. The *Aspleniums* are grouped on a terraced bank, the rarest member of the Fernery being *A. Filix-foemina* [sic] var. *polyclados* found in a neighboring stone wall. In exchange for a plant of this I secured last year var. *stenodon*. If I were to mention the names of the ferns which I have had and which have died my list would be very much longer, but in spite of these losses I have found ferns by far the most satisfactory plants to cultivate.



## APPENDIX D

## Boston University

College of Arts and Sciences  
725 Commonwealth Avenue, Room 301  
Boston, Massachusetts 02215  
617/353-2520  
Fax: 617/353-3243



Art History Department

February 13, 2001

Professor John Auwaerter  
Marshall Hall 405  
College of Environmental Science and Forestry  
One Forestry Drive  
Syracuse, NY 13210-2778

Dear Professor Auwaerter:

Thank you for your letter and enclosures concerning the Charles A. Platt designs for the Frederick Billings estate in Woodstock, Vermont. I envy you working on such an interesting project.

Although I had never found any documentation about Platt's involvement in this project, I am firmly convinced that it is his work. First of all, you have an invoice signed by Platt for professional services in 1898, which must be one of the earliest surviving business records from Platt's career. Secondly, the design resembles other Platt projects, which I will discuss further below. Thirdly, Laura Billings and her husband Frederick S. Lee were later clients for two other Platt projects, their New York townhouse (1904-05) at 125 East 65<sup>th</sup> Street and their country estate (1906-07) on River Road in Woodstock, overlooking the Billings farmland. (You state in your letter that Laura Billings died in 1890, but I assume that you mean 1980). You also mention Jack Platt, Charles' brother who was a point of contact between the two families. Charles designed a formal garden for his brother's house, called Villa Narcault at 68 Eagle Rock Way in Montclair, New Jersey in 1897. I know very little about his brother or their relationship. You might want to contact Charles A. Platt, II, the architect grandson of Charles A. Platt for more information on his great uncle. You can contact him at Platt & Byard, Architects, 19 Union Square West, 12<sup>th</sup> floor, New York, NY 10003. (212) 691-2440.

Now for your questions about Platt's working relationships at this time and the character of the Billings gardens. As you may know, Platt was trained as a painter and etcher but began to design houses and gardens in the 1890s for himself and his friends at the summer Colony in Cornish, New Hampshire. His first project beyond the circle of Cornish and family clients was a house and garden in Needham, Massachusetts in 1895 for Dr. John Elliott, a friend of Platt's second wife. Thus, the Billings projects fit into the pattern of Platt's first ventures as a professional landscape architect and architect (without any

academic training or apprenticeship). The plans for both the fountain terrace and the long terrace are visually related to other projects of these decade. There are any number of other commissions where Platt designed a quincunx plan with or without a central fountain. This classic garden form can be seen in the gardens for Platt's own house in Cornish (1892 ff) or the commission for Annie Lazarus, High Court, (1890-91) just across Platt Road from his own house in Cornish. The earth terracing with steps at the Billings garden also relates to both of these projects. The long terrace makes me think at once of the Hedge Walk in the Quirinal Gardens in Rome which Platt photographed and drew in watercolor for the frontispiece of his 1894 book, Italian Gardens. One other project contemporary with the Billings designs is Faulkner Farm in Brookline, Massachusetts, 1897-98. The garden is much larger than the elements he added to the Billings estate, but the idea of a long view terrace is also evident in the woodland gardens above the house in Brookline. For the Spragues of Faulkner Farm, Platt also acquired and installed fountains, wellheads, statues and other elements that he had purchased in Italy for the clients. So, in every way the Billings gardens are characteristic of Platt's work at this time.

For further information on Platt, I refer you to three sources:

Royal Cortissoz, A Monograph on the Works of Charles A. Platt. New York: The Architectural Book Publishing Company, 1913.

Keith N. Morgan, Charles A. Platt, The Artist as Architect. New York and Cambridge: MIT Press for the Architectural History Foundation, 1985. Note the catalogue of Platt commission in the appendix for basic information on project near in date to the Billings gardens.

Keith N. Morgan, ed., Shaping an American Landscape: The Art and Architecture of Charles A. Platt. Hanover, NH: The University Press of New England for the Hood Museum of Art, 1995. See the essay on Platt's work as a landscape architect by Rebecca Davidson.

If I can provide any further information, please do contact me. I would love to get a copy of the final project. Are you writing an historic landscape report on the property? How well documented is the earlier design by Robert (you say Richard in your letter, but I assume it must be Robert) Morris Copeland? If your research allows you the time to travel and see any of these gardens, please let me know if you need help in gaining access. Good luck with your research.

Sincerely yours,

  
Keith N. Morgan  
Professor of Art History

## APPENDIX E

Plant lists & notes from Ellen Shipman plan of Flower Border (Long Terrace) and the Flower Garden

### FLOWER BORDER (1912)

(Varieties as noted on plan; numbers next to plants indicate quantity)

1. Hardy Asters
    - A. Herbstalfe, blue, 45
    - B. Floribunde, blue, 25
    - C. Norde Angloe, purple, 25
    - D. Norde Angloe rosea, pink, 15
    - E. Top Sawyer, violet, 40
    - F. White Queen, white, 55
  2. Althea rosea, hollyhocks
    - A. Pink, 55
    - B. White, 25
    - C. Yellow, 45
  3. Anthemis tictona, false chamomile, yellow, 50
  4. Achillea plarmica "The Pearl," white, 70
  5. Anemone japonica, Japanese Anemone
    - A. Alba, 55
    - B. Whirlwind, 40
    - C. Japonica rubra, 35
  6. Boltonia, starwort
    - A. Latisquama, pink, 65
    - B. Asteroides, white, 135
  7. Dainthus barbatus, Sweet William
    - A. Newport Pink, 200
    - B. Dark red, 60
    - C. White, 80
  8. Delphinium, larkspur
    - A. Belladonna, pale blue, 30
    - B. Formosum, dark blue, 45
    - C. Sulphureum, yellow, 20
    - D. Gold Medal Hybrids, blue, 25
  9. Digitalis gloxinae florae, foxglove, white only, 160
  10. Gypsophila paniculata, Baby's Breath, white, 68
  11. Hemerocallis flava & thungergii, 55
  12. Iris Germanica, German Iris
    - A. Blue Boy, 10
    - B. Edith, blue, 30
    - C. Queen of May, pinkish, 30
    - D. Florentina alba, white, 30
    - E. Madame Chereau, white & blue, 50
    - F. Shakespeare, yellow, 30
    - G. Purple King, 35
    - H. Pallida delmotica, blue, 20
  13. Iris Kaempferi, Japanese iris
    - A. Dreers #4 white, 75
    - B. " ", #26 purple, 50
    - C. " ", #94 purple, 75
    - D. " ", #107 white, 30
    - E. " ", #22 white & gold, 75
  14. Lupinus polyphyllus, lupins
    - A. Dreer's Moerheim, blue, 45
    - B. " ", blue, 25
  15. Phlox
    - A. Independence, white, 45
    - B. Anton Mercie, lilac, 25
    - C. Le Mahdi, purple, 35
    - D. Crepuscul, purple, 60
    - E. Dawn, pale pink, 50
    - F. Pink Beauty, rose, 60
    - G. Jeanne d'Arc, white, 50
    - H. Mme P Langier, 35
    - I. Elizabeth Campbell, pink, no #
    - J. L'Evenement, no #
    - K. Miss Lingard, white, no #
    - L. R. P. Struthers, red, no #
    - M. Frau Anton Buchner, white, no #
    - N. Saison Lierval, no #
    - O. Selma, rose, no #
  16. Oenothera Youngii, evening primrose, 60
- Plants Next to Hedge:
- Dianthus plumarius, pinks, 75
- Digitalis, foxglove, 40
- Funkia, in variety, 50
- Ferns, in variety, 40
- Herchera sanguinea, coral bells, 20
- Pansies, 45
- Papaver nudicaule, Iceland poppy, 40

Saxifraga crassifolia, 20  
 Sedum spectabile, 20  
 Alyssum saxatile, 35  
 Campanula carpatica, 50

Notes:

Seed sweet alyssum all along edge of 8' border, also plant Darwin Tulips each side of walk.

Replace foxgloves with pale yellow calendulas & rose pink zinnias & asters about July 15.

Replace Sweet William with stocks, snapdragons, candytuft, lavender pink & white.

Start Sweet William, foxgloves & hollyhocks in July the summer before using.

**FLOWER GARDEN (1913)**

(Note: this plan does not have a list as the Long Border plan does. List is compiled from annotated plan sorted alphabetically as plants are named. Numbers next to plants indicate quantity-not always specified)

**Shrubs**

Pyramidal Japanese yew, 8

**Southwest Center Bed**

Anemone, Japanese  
 Anthemis tinctoria, 5  
 Boltonia, 12  
 Candidum lilies, 10  
 Candytuft, lavender  
 Dictanmus, 3  
 Hemerocallis flava, 17  
 Hollyhocks, 6  
 Iris  
     German, 10  
     Japanese, 30  
 Larkspur  
     Annual pink & white, seed in the autumn  
     [ no variety indicated], 10  
     Belladonna, 10  
     Crepusceul, 15  
     Dawn, 6  
 Lupins, pink, 15  
 Paeonies, pink, 6  
 Phlox  
     Independence, 16

L'Evenement  
 Miss Lingard  
 Poppies, single Oriental, seed in autumn  
 Salpiglassis, 25  
 Statice latifolia

**Southeast Center Bed**

Anemone, Japanese, 25  
 Anthemis tinctoria, 11  
 Boltonia, 17  
 Candytuft, lavender, 45  
 Dictanmus, 6  
 Hemerocallis flava, 18  
 Hollyhocks, 4  
 Iris  
     German, 10  
     Japanese, 27  
 Larkspur  
     [no variety indicated], 4  
     Belladonna, 13  
 Lilies, Candidum, 10  
 Lupins, pink, 8  
 Paeonies, pink, 6  
 Phlox  
     Elizabeth Campbell, 18  
     Independence, 20  
     L'Evenement, 20  
     Miss Lingard, 25  
     Saison Lierval, 25  
 Rosa  
     Pink Baby Rambler, 6  
 Statice latifolia, 6  
 Stock gilly  
 Veronica longifolia subsessilis, 24

**Northeast Center Bed**

Achillea "Pearl," 3  
 Anthemis tinctoria, 9  
 Baby's Breath, 3  
 Boltonia, 18  
 Campanula persicifolia, 16  
 Dictanmus, 6  
 Hemerocallis flava, 18  
 Hollyhocks, 8  
 Iris  
     German, 10

Japanese, 25  
 Pallida dalmatica, 15  
 Larkspur  
 [ no variety indicated], 4  
 Belladonna, 12  
 Lilies, Candidum, 8  
 Lupins, pink, 7  
 Oenothera youngii, 3  
 Paeonies, pink, 6  
 Phlox  
     Elizabeth Campbell, 20  
     Crepuscul, 16  
     Frau Anton Buchner, 20  
 Independence, 25  
     Jeanne d'Arc, 15  
 Karan d'Ache, 13  
 L'Evenement, 12  
 Miss Lingard  
 Pink Beauty, 22  
 Poppies, Oriental, pink, 10  
 Rosa  
 Pink Baby Rambler, 6  
 Salvia azurea gr. fl., 12  
 Snapdragons, 30  
 Statice latifolia, 5

#### **Northwest Center Bed**

Anthemis tinctoria, 4  
 Baby's Breath, 3  
 Boltonia, no #  
 Calenduals, pale yellow, 25  
 Campanula persicifolia, 8  
 Candytuft, white, 12  
 Columbines, 6  
 Dictanmus, 3  
 Hemerocallis flava, 18  
 Hollyhocks, 3  
 Iris  
     German, 16  
     Japanese, 25  
 Larkspur  
     [ no variety indicated], 6  
     Belladonna, 10  
 Lilies, Candidum, 10  
 Petunia, Rosy morn, 10  
 Phlox

Chanzy, 22  
 Frau Anton Buchner, no #  
 Independence, 18  
 Jeanne d'Arc, 13  
 L'Evenement, 16  
 Miss Lingard, 18  
 Mme Paul Dutrie, 33  
 Pink Beauty, 15  
 Poppies  
     Double & single flowered, seed in autumn  
     Oriental, 10  
 Rosa  
     Pink Baby Rambler, 6  
 Salpiglossis, 20

#### **Outside Beds**

Alyssum saxatile, 7  
 Anemone pennsylvanicum, 12  
 Coral bells, 27  
 Dicentra eximia, 6  
 Ferns, 23  
 Forget-me-nots, 30  
 Funkia, 13  
 Blue Flag, 12  
 Pansies, 72  
 Pinks, 24  
 Poppies, Iceland, 17  
 Saxifrage, 20  
 Sedum, 20





## APPENDIX F

Woodland, Wetland, and Alpine Herbaceous Plants Shipped to Mansion Grounds, 1979

(Zenon Schreiber receipt dated December 27, 1979, Resortscapes, Inc. files, Woodstock, Vermont )

The following material was planted on the Mansion grounds in fall 1979 under the supervision of landscape designer Zenon Schreiber. The documentation does not indicate the location of the plants, but they were most probably planted either in the Hillside Gardens, the Flower Garden, or the rock gardens.

*Aruncus sylvestris* (Goat's beard)  
*Asarum europaeum* (European wild ginger)  
*Astilbe bitemata* (False spirea)  
*Bellis perennis minuta* (English daisy)  
*Cimicifuga americana* (American bugbane)  
*Cimicifuga racemosa* (Cohash bugbane or Snakeroot)  
*Corydalis lutea* (Yellow corydalis)  
*Cypripedium acaule* (Lady's slipper)  
*Cypripedium pubescens* (Yellow lady's slipper)  
*Dicentra cucullaria* (Dutchman's breeches)  
*Dionaea muscipula* (Venus flytrap)  
*Galax aphylla* (urceolata) (Galax)  
*Hepatica acutiloba* (Sharp-lobed hepatica)  
*Hepatica triloba* (Three-lobed hepatica)  
*Heuchera americana* (American alumroot)  
*Lobelia cardinalis* (Cardinal-flower)  
*Mertensia virginica* (Virginia bluebells)  
*Mitchella repens* (Partridge-berry)  
*Orchis spectabilis* (Showy orchis)  
*Podophyllum peltatum* (Common mayapple)  
*Polygonatum commutatum* (Great Solomon's seal)  
*Sarracenia flava* (Trumpet pitcher-plant)  
*Sarracenia purpurea* (Common pitcher-plant)  
*Sempervivum arachnoideum* (Spiderweb houseleek)  
*Shortia galacifolia* (Oconee-bells)  
*Silene virginica* (Fire-pink catchfly)  
*Smilacina racemosa* (False Solomon's seal or wild spikenard)  
*Thalictrum dioicum* (Early meadow-rue)  
*Trillium grandiflorum* (Snow trillium)  
*Trillium undulatum* (Painted trillium)  
*Uvularia sessilifolia* (Little merrybells or wild oats)  
*Viola pedata bicolor* (Bicolor birdfoot violet)



APPENDIX G

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

TITLE: Conservation

Form 10-300 (Rev. 6-72)

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries complete applicable sections)

STATE: Vermont	
COUNTY: Windsor	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	

**1. NAME**

COMMON: Marsh-Billings House

AND/OR HISTORIC: George Perkins Marsh Boyhood Home

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER: 54 Elm Street (Vermont Route 12)

CITY OR TOWN: Woodstock CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: (at large)

STATE: Vermont CODE: 050 COUNTY: Windsor CODE: 027

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious		
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific		

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME: M/M Laurance S. Rockefeller

STREET AND NUMBER: 30 Rockefeller Plaza, Room 5600

CITY OR TOWN: New York STATE: New York CODE: 036

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Town Clerk's Office

STREET AND NUMBER: 29 Central Street

CITY OR TOWN: Woodstock STATE: Vermont CODE: 050

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY: Architectural Survey of the Ottaqueechee Valley

DATE OF SURVEY: 1971  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Ottaqueechee Regional Planning and Development Commission

STREET AND NUMBER: 3 Central Street

CITY OR TOWN: Woodstock STATE: Vermont CODE: 050

STATE: Vermont	COUNTY: Windsor
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

7. DESCRIPTION	
CONDITION	(Check One)
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Fair <input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated <input type="checkbox"/> Ruins <input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered <input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered <input type="checkbox"/> Moved <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site
DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE	
<p>In 1805, Charles Marsh began construction at Woodstock, Vermont, of the house which would be the boyhood home of his son, George Perkins Marsh. Approximately 50 by 40 feet in size with a rear ell, the house had an east, five-bay front with central entrance and five-bay flanks with another central entrance on the south side. Two stories in height, it had a gabled roof with the ridge parallel to the front elevation.</p> <p>The Marsh Home and the 246.6 acre farm of which it was the center were purchased in 1869 by Frederick Billings, who began immediately to alter the building. Billings added a large wing at the southeast corner, changed the fenestration to three front bays, and raised the height a full story by adding a mansard roof. In 1885 Billings employed architect Henry Hudson Holley to design further extensive additions and alterations; the house is now an excellent example of the latter's work.</p> <p>In its present form, the Marsh Home, known locally as the Marsh-Billings House, is a large, rambling country mansion; 3-1/2 stories in height, it measures approximately 78 by 129 feet, excluding the porches. To all appearances, the house is a structure in the Queen Anne style of the 1880's, in which numerous gables and bay windows, off-sets, broad porches with lattice and spindle ornament, upper loggias, and tall chimneys with ornamental brickwork combine to create a highly irregular and picturesque effect. The only exterior elements of the house which appear to date from its original construction are portions of the brick masonry on the front and side elevations to a point above the second story window lintels.</p> <p>The interiors of the house, which date entirely from 1869 or later, are notable for their fine craftsmanship. The reception room in the northeast corner is finished in mahogany. The dining room, on the north side beyond a cross hall, has a richly carved oak fireplace signed "I.K.," a built-in sideboard, oak panelled dado, and elaborate parquet flooring. The central hall has an oak panelled ceiling, staircase with spindle work balustrade, oak dado, and built-in hat stand. The music room, at the southeast corner of the house, has two fireplaces with Tiffany tiling and a high oak dado above which is heavily embossed wallpaper in imitation of tooled leather. The library, at the southwest corner, is finished in walnut with burlled veneers and ebonized trim. Stained glass windows in the music room and library are of excellent quality. The house retains many of its original lighting fixtures and quantities of furniture, paintings, and objets de virtue from the Billings period. The present owners have taken great care to preserve the interiors as they were c. 1885.</p> <p>Included in the National Historic Landmark designation for the George Perkins Marsh Boyhood Home are several subsidiary buildings and some 40 acres of land located on the lower slopes of Mt. Tom (representing only a portion of the extensive Woodstock estate assembled by Billings). With the exception of approximately one acre at the intersection of North and River Streets (see sketch map), this property is part of the</p>	
(continued)	

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

Form 10-300a  
(July 1969)UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM((NATIONAL HISTORIC  
LANDMARK))

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	Vermont
COUNTY	Windsor
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

7. Description: (1) George Perkins Marsh Boyhood Home

246.6 Marsh farm acquired by Billings in 1869 and is bordered along River and Elm Streets by a stone wall erected for Charles Marsh in 1815. The property was landscaped by R. M. Copeland immediately after Billings' purchase and still retains the character of a 19th century rural estate.

The Marsh Home stands amid rolling lawns some 50 yards above Elm Street (Vermont Route 12); though close to the highway, the building is effectively screened from it by mature hedges and trees. Southwest of the house is a sunken formal garden walled with coursed fieldstone. Beyond the garden is a two-story wooden belvedere in Swiss chalet style; built about 1869, it fronts two other structures, a greenhouse and a bowling alley (formerly also a greenhouse). North of the Marsh Home stands a 2-1/2 story wooden stable constructed about 1885. Further north is a shingled 1-1/2 story cottage, now used as a caretaker's residence. Beyond this relatively open area, the property is covered by mature forest broken by winding carriage lanes and bridle paths.

Boundaries of the National Historic Landmark: beginning at the intersection of the Woodstock Town Line with the mid-line of Elm Street (Vermont Route 12); thence running east, south and west in a curving line along the mid-line of Elm Street to its intersection with the mid-line of River Street; thence running west and south in a curving line along the mid-line of River Street to its intersection with the mid-line of North Street; thence running west-north-west along the mid-line of North Street for its first 100 feet and thereafter following the same line extended to its intersection with the Woodstock Town Line; thence running north-north-east along the Woodstock Town Line to the point of beginning.

The 1 1/2-story frame and clapboard house located at the intersection of North and River Streets is included in these boundaries for convenience in definition but does not contribute to the national significance of the landmark property.

GPO 1969-274

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

6. SIGNIFICANCE			
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	
SPECIFIC DATES (If Applicable and Known) 1805, 1869, 1885			
AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conservation			
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE			
<p>Incorporated within this rambling 3-1/2 story brick house is the smaller 2-story house, begun in 1805, which was the boyhood home of George Perkins Marsh. A distinguished scholar in many fields and a dedicated public servant, Marsh is most significant as the author of <u>Man and Nature or the Physical Geography as Modified by Human Behavior</u>, published in 1864. Through his writing, Marsh opened up an area which had previously been of little concern--the preservation of man's natural environment--and provided the intellectual stimulus for the conservation movement in the United States. In brief, as David C. Coyle states in his book <u>Conservation</u>, "Marsh's volume(s) give a foretaste of practically all modern ideas about conservation."</p> <p>Additional historical and architectural values are attached to the Marsh Boyhood Home as a result of its becoming the home of Frederick Billings. In 1869, Billings acquired the home and made extensive alterations then and later which have transformed it into an imposing residence in the Queen Anne style of the 1880's. Frederick Billings was a lawyer, railroad executive, and philanthropist. He was an original partner in the Northern Pacific Railroad, became its president in 1879, and financed its completion from Dakota to the Columbia River.</p> <p>Maintained in excellent condition, the George Perkins Marsh Boyhood Home is privately owned and not open to the public.</p> <p><u>Historical Background</u></p> <p>George Perkins Marsh was born in Woodstock, Vermont, in 1801 (his birthplace is no longer extant). Four years later, his father, the distinguished lawyer Charles Marsh, began construction of the house which was Marsh's boyhood home. Marsh entered Dartmouth College in 1816 and was graduated in 1820 with highest honors.</p> <p>After teaching school for a time, Marsh turned to law and in 1825 was admitted to the Vermont bar. A member of the Whig party, he won election to Congress in 1834 and began a long and distinguished career of public service. President Taylor appointed him United States Minister to Turkey in 1849, and President Lincoln made him the first United States Minister to Italy, where he served with distinction for the remaining 22 years of his life.</p>			
(continued)			

Form 10-300a  
(July 1969)UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
(NATIONAL HISTORIC INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM  
LEADWORKS)  
(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Vermont	
COUNTY Windsor	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

8. Significance: (1) George Perkins Marsh Boyhood Home

Marsh formulated many of his ideas on the conservation problem during the 15 years he served in the House of Representatives. At the time that his first monumental work was published in 1864, with the Civil War drawing to a close and the final western push about to begin, the United States was in need of a land philosopher who could provide an agenda for land rescue and restoration. With the publication of Man and Nature or the Physical Geography as Modified by Human Behavior, Marsh became that philosopher, and his book became the intellectual bible of the Conservation Movement.

An innate naturalist, Marsh objected to the wanton destruction of natural resources on the same philosophic grounds as Thoreau. He was "forest born," and he once wrote in his youth that "the trees, the flowers, the wild animals were to me persons not things." Through the use of historical examples, Marsh demonstrated in his study that Americans, acting under the myth of superabundance, were carelessly destroying their forest, woodlands, and other gifts of nature, much as the ancient and classical countries of the Mediterranean had done. He predicted that man in the 19th century would share the fate of fallen ancient empires, unless he was prepared to act as a moral instead of a destructive agent. Marsh was not a negativist, however. He called for such positive remedial steps as the planning of windfalls to protect the soil, the preservation of forests to aid in water conservation, and an end to the destruction of wildlife.

Undoubtedly influenced by the practical work of Frederick Law Olmsted, Marsh, in a second revised edition of his book, published in 1874, added a section discussing the public park idea. He asserted that because of the rapid deterioration of the northern cities from the blight of industrialization, "Some easily accessible region of American soil [should] remain as far as possible in its primitive condition . . . A garden of recreation for the lovers of nature and an asylum where indigenous trees . . . plants . . . [and] beasts may dwell and perpetuate their kinds."

George Perkins Marsh died in 1882, not living to see his ideas translated into action.

The second significant resident of the Marsh Home, Frederick Billings, was born on September 27, 1823, at Royalton, Vermont. Graduating from the State University at Burlington, he studied law for two years. When the gold fever struck, he moved to California; instead of mining, however, he opened a law office, from which he made considerable money when the inevitable demand for legal arbitration occurred. His law firm soon became the leading one in San Francisco.

After returning from a trip to Europe, Billings attempted to resume his San Francisco law practice. Ill health prevented him from doing so and, in

(continued)

GPO 9-21-724



Form 10.300a  
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
(NATIONAL HISTORIC INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM  
LANDMARKS)

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Vermont	
COUNTY Windsor	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

8. Significance: (2) George Perkins Marsh Boyhood Home

1869, he purchased the Marsh estate in Woodstock. Over the next 20 years, and after 1885 with the assistance of architect Henry Hudson Holley, Billings made extensive alterations which transformed the house into an imposing residence in the Queen Anne style.

Billings became interested in railroads in 1866 on a trip to the Pacific Northwest. He became one of the 12 original partners in the Northern Pacific Railroad Company. The company operated with great success until the panic of 1873. After gaining its presidency, Billings reorganized the unstable firm and financed the completion of the road from Dakota to the Columbia River.

In 1881, Billings was forced from the presidency during a series of complicated intra-company power maneuvers with fellow railroad magnate Henry Villard, under whom the road was completed. However, as Villard readily admitted in his Memoirs, the credit for making the completion possible belonged to Billings.

His career as a railroad executive finished, Billings devoted the last 9 years of his life to philanthropy. The University of Vermont, Amherst College, and the Congregational Church of Woodstock, among others, benefited from his generosity. Billings died in Woodstock on September 30, 1890.

The Marsh Home is now owned by Laurance S. Rockefeller and his wife, Mary French Rockefeller, a direct descendant of Billings; used as a vacation home, the house is not open to the public.

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Dana, Henry S., History of Woodstock, Vermont (Boston, 1889).  
 Malone, Dumas, ed., Dictionary of American Biography (New York, 1943; 21 volumes).  
 Marsh, Caroline Crane., The Life and Letters of George Perkins Marsh (Syracuse, 1888).  
 Teagle, Rhoda. Woodstock Then and Now (Woodstock, 1952).

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	U.T.M.			LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
NW	18.699980	4833930	Degree	Minutes	Seconds	
NE	18.700380	4833850	°	'	"	
SE	18.700220	4833340				
SW	18.699790	4833460				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF DESIGNATED PROPERTY: c. 40 acres

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

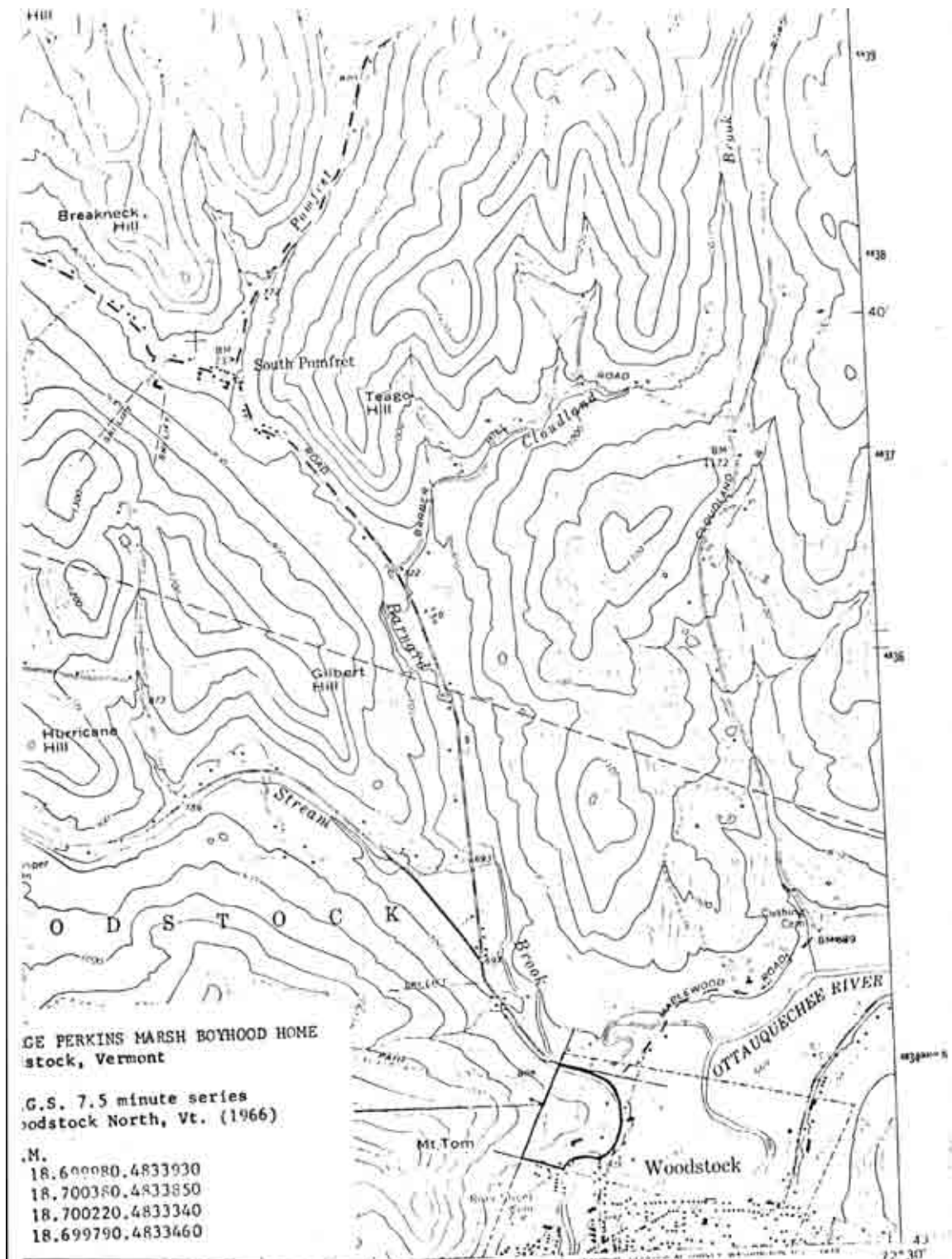
NAME AND TITLE: Polly M. Rettig, Historian, Landmark Review Project; original form prepared by John D. McDermott, Historian, 5/26/67

ORGANIZATION: Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service DATE: 12/9/74

STREET AND NUMBER: 1100 L Street NW

CITY OR TOWN: Washington 20240 STATE: District of Columbia CODE: 011

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION	NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION
<p>As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:</p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)</p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Title _____</p> <p>Date _____</p>	<p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register</p> <p>(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS) Landmark Designated: <u>10/11/67</u> date</p> <p>Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation: <u>Conrad Skene</u> 9-17-75 date</p> <p>(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS) Chief, Hist. &amp; Arch. Surveys</p> <p>Date _____</p> <p>ATTEST: <u>A. R. Moore</u> 4/25/75 date</p> <p>Keeper of The National Register</p> <p>Date _____</p>



## APPENDIX H

### LIST OF REPOSITORIES CONSULTED AND RESULTS

#### American Institute of Architects

Connecticut Chapter  
87 Willow St.  
New Haven, CT 06511-2627  
(203) 865-2195 Mara

#### National Chapter

Membership 800-242-3837 Antoinette  
Contacted for information on Theodor Muller, whose office was in Westport. The Connecticut Chapter's membership records go back only to 1990 and contain nothing on Muller. The National Chapter only has electronic membership status information going back to 1982.

#### American Society of Interior Designers

608 Massachusetts Avenue NE  
Washington, D.C. 20002-6006  
Member Services 202-546-3480  
Contacted for information on Theodor Muller, who was a Fellow of the ASID; no response.

#### American Society of Landscape Architects

National office archives  
Contacted via e-mail [scahill@asla.org](mailto:scahill@asla.org) for information on landscape architect Brian Lynch and landscape designer Zenon Schreiber. No documentation available on either.

#### Barrington Area Historical Society

Main Street  
Barrington, RI 02806  
<http://nns.nslsilus.org/bakhome/BHS> (no available phone number or contact)  
The Catalog of Landscape Records at Wave Hill lists the Barrington Area Historical Society as a source for Copeland records. No response; collection probably contains only a reference to a local work of Copeland's.

#### Bartlett Tree Company

Woodstock Office  
Chris  
(802) 457-2406  
Bartlett has done tree work on the Mansion grounds for

many years. Their records, however, generally go back only about five years.

#### Bergen County Historical Society Library

Bob Griffing, library manager  
(201) 816-0585  
[bnb@cybernex.net](mailto:bnb@cybernex.net)

Contacted for information on Zenon Schreiber, who lived in Paramus and Bergenfield, Bergen County. The Society has no records on Zenon Schreiber.

#### Bergenfield Museum Society

52 Beverly Place  
Bergenfield, NJ 07621  
(201) 384-8656  
Joanne Thomas, Secretary

Zenon Schreiber was a resident of Bergenfield in his later years. The Museum Society has collected some biographical information on him, as well as descriptions of his work at the Birmingham (AL) Botanical Garden and the Leonard Buck Garden in Somerset County, New Jersey. Joanne Thomas stated the Society has no information on the whereabouts of Schreiber's papers or heirs.

#### Billings Family Archives

Housed at Billings Farm & Museum  
Woodstock, Vermont  
Janet Houghton, Esther Swift  
(802) 457-2355 / 457-3368

This collection, along with the Billings Farm & Museum Archives, provided the bulk of the primary-source documentation for this CLR. The following material was examined:

#### Archives collection:

- A11: Diaries of Frederick Billings
- A12: Diaries of Julia Parmly Billings, Memoirs of Julia Parmly Billings
- A13, A14: Diaries of Mary Montagu Billings French
- A15: Miscellaneous Diaries: Diaries of Elizabeth Billings
- A17: Account Books: Billings, Frederick, Expense Account, 1873, Woodstock.
- A20: Scrapbooks: Miller, Lester Anson, et al., "Reminiscences of Woodstock."

- A21: Scrapbooks: Album, McDill, Julia Lee. "The Billings Family Woodstock and New York, c.1947."
- A24: Property Deeds: Fences, Woodstock, Vt., 1869-1881; Springs; Gardener's House and adjoining lots, North Street, Woodstock, Vt., 1869; Marsh, Charles, Jr., Miscellaneous Deeds and Mortgages, 1847-1869; Marsh Homestead, 54 Elm Street, Woodstock, Vt., Deeds from Rev. B. C. C. Parker, 1859; Marsh House and Farm, 54 Elm Street, Woodstock, Vt., Deed, 1869.
- A24: Billings Estate, Woodstock, Vt. Greenhouse Inventories, 1892-1895.
- A25: Frederick Billings Estate: Billings, Frederick, Supplementary Instructions on the Administration of his Estate, 1890; Billings, Frederick, Will and Codicils, 1890; Frederick Billings Estate, Annual Reports and Inventories, 1890-1914 (select); Frederick Billings Estate, Miscellaneous Correspondence, 1890-1916 (select).
- A26: Billings Estate Corporation and Related Papers: Annual Reports, 1915-1921, 1924, 1931 (select); Correspondence, 1935-1970 (select).
- A27: Billings and Parmly Families: Wills and Financial Papers: Billings, Elizabeth, Estate Correspondence, 1945-1948 (select); Billings, Julia Parmly, Will, 1914 and Estate Settlement; French, Mary Montagu Billings, Will, 1914-1950, and Estate Settlement.
- A29: Legal Documents: Local: Billings Estate, Miscellaneous Correspondence and Receipts, 1873-1965.
- A32: Garden Workshop Papers: Equipment; Irrigation; Muller Renovations, 1956-1965; Plants and Seeds; Catalogues (2 files); Putting Green; Swimming Pool; Tiles and Masonry, Miscellaneous.
- A43: Miscellaneous Research Projects: Houghton, Janet R.: "The Billings Mansion: A History of its Design and Furnishing, 1977."
- A43: Miscellaneous Genealogies and Biographies: Correspondence: Schreiber, Zenon.
- Photograph Collection (Relevant boxes selected by Janet Houghton):
- P9: Stereographs: Billings Estate; Woodstock, Vt.
- P19: Glass Slides: Billings Estate; Woodstock, Vt.
- P21: Glass Negatives: Billings Estate (2 files).
- P22: Loose Photographs: Billings Estate, General Views; Billings Estate, Mansion Exteriors; Billings individuals (several files); Buildings and Landscapes.
- P26: Photograph Albums 26, 28, 39.
- P27: Photograph Albums 45, 46, 47, 48.
- P28: Photograph Album 64.
- P29: Antique Negatives and Contact Prints: Billings Estate; Woodstock, Vt.
- P35: Loose Photographs, Oversize: Billings Mansion. Also reviewed: photographs in Mansion Guest Books, volumes 2 and 3.
- Maps, Plans, and Oversize Documents:
- Rolls: Woodshed, Aerial Photographs.
- Drawer 6: Billings Estate: Map Series by Doton and his successors, c.1887-1914.
- Drawer 8: Billings Estate: Maps by Berger & Grant, Cairns, Doton, et al., 1887-1901.
- Drawer 9: Billings Estate: Miscellaneous Maps to 1950: Lands and Grounds.
- Drawer 11-12: Billings Estate: Miscellaneous Plans to 1950: Structures.
- Drawer 13: Billings Estate: Miscellaneous Maps and Plans after 1950: Lands, Grounds, and Structures.
- Drawer 14-16: Billings Estate: Plans by Theodor Muller, 1955-1966.
- Billings Farm & Museum Library**  
Woodstock, Vermont  
Esther Swift, Librarian / Archivist  
(802) 457-2355  
Research focused on photograph collections, farm fiscal records, George Aitken Correspondence, Farm Memo Diary, and other records related to the development and maintenance of the Mansion grounds. This collection, along with the Billings Family Archives, provided the bulk

of the primary-source documentation for this CLR. Esther Swift also provided valuable research guidance in the Billings Family Archives as well as information on the history of Billings Farm and the history of agriculture in Vermont.

### **Boston Public Library**

Janice Chadbourne, Curator of Fine Arts

700 Boylston Street

Boston, Massachusetts 02116

*[fine\\_arts@bpl.org](mailto:fine_arts@bpl.org)*

Contacted reference desk via e-mail for information on the architectural firm of Faulkner, Clarke, and Dorr, which prepared plans for the greenhouses at the Mansion grounds in 1870. Received biographical information on the three partners as listed in the Directory of Boston Architects.

### **Century Association Library**

Karen Crane, Assistant Librarian

7 West 43rd Street

New York, NY

(212) 944-0090

The Century Association Library has Charles A. Platt's personal library and an unindexed photograph collection; it does not have any correspondence, plans, or other manuscripts. Karen Crane thought there was a chance there might be a photograph of the Billings estate in the collection. According to Keith Morgan, an authority on Charles A. Platt the photographs at the Century Association are, however, of European gardens and buildings, not of Platt's work.

### **Columbia University, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library**

1172 Amsterdam Avenue

New York, NY 10027

(212) 854-8403

The primary collections of drawings and plans of Charles A. Platt and Detlef Lienau are held by the Avery Library. According to a search of the finding guide by librarian Janet Parks, the Platt collection contains only one entry for Vermont (Frederick Lee house in Woodstock) and no

entries under Billings. The collection is primarily drawings and plans and does not contain correspondence or other materials; it only contains six Platt projects dated before 1900. The Lienau collection, which is also not complete, contains no materials listed under Billings for the years 1870-1875. Also searched Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals: 1973, second edition: searched under Platt, Charles A.; Hutcheson, Martha Brookes; Shipman, Ellen Biddle; Billings; and Woodstock. Searched supplements to 1993 for Brian Lynch and Zenon Schreiber. Located one period article on gardens of Platt and two articles on a New Jersey garden designed by Schreiber.

### **Concord Public Library**

129 Main Street

Concord, MA 01742-2494

The Catalog of Landscape Records at Wave Hill indicated the library has a collection of Robert Morris Copeland records in its Sleepy Hollow Collection. Gay Weiss, librarian, indicated the library has records only pertaining to Copeland's work at Sleepy Hollow cemetery.

### **Cornell University Libraries**

Kroch Library, Rare and Manuscript Collection

Library Annex

Ithaca, New York

(607) 255-3530

"Ellen McGowan Biddle Shipman Papers, 1914[1913]-1946" contains plans, photographs, and office papers. Consulted paper guide, including "Index of Drawings," "Correspondence and Accounts," and "Photographs" indices. The only item pertaining to the Mansion grounds is the original plan for the Flower Garden (Foursquare Garden) entitled "Planting Plan of Flower Garden for Miss Elizabeth Billings," 1912. This is the earliest plan in the collection.

### **Dartmouth College**

Sarah Hartwell, Reading Room Supervisor 03755

(603) 646-2037

Sarah Hartwell searched their small collection of George Perkins Marsh papers, including Marsh Family of Woodstock Vt. manuscripts, and found nothing that references

the Woodstock home. The Catalog of Landscape Records at Wave Hill indicates that Dartmouth contains manuscripts of Ellen Biddle Shipman; according to Ms. Hartwell, this collection consists of a variety of papers relating to Cornish Colony members, not to the work of Shipman.

#### **Eisenhower National Historic Site**

Carol Hegeman, *Carol\_Hegeman@nps.gov*

Supervisory Historian

Gettysburgh, PA

John Wiggin, former forester for the Rockefellers, recalled that Zenon Schreiber did work for the Eisenhowers; the Bergenfield Historical Society referenced Schreiber's design of the entryway for the estate. According to Ms. Hegeman, the park has no record of Schreiber doing any work at the estate.

#### **Green Mountain & Finger Lakes National Forests**

David Lacy, Forest Archeologist, *dlacy@fs.fed.us*

231 North Main Street

Rutland, VT 05701

(802) 747-6700

David Lacy serves as the scoping archaeologist for Section 106 review at MABI. He provided information he completed for a reconnaissance assessment of the archeological sensitivity of the park, mostly along the Route 12 corridor.

#### **Harvard University, Graduate School of Design**

Reference Department / Frances Loeb Library

Sarah Dickinson, Reference/Collections Librarian

*libref@gsd.harvard.edu* / (617) 496-1304

Alumni office, Jackie Gaugin

(617) 495-4315

Contacted via e-mail for information on Boston-area designers associated with MABI: Faulkner, Clarke, and Dorr (greenhouses) and Robert Morris Copeland, and for general information inquiry. The library has no relevant information. GSD alumni office records indicate that Bryan Lynch graduated from the Design School (DES) in 1933 (undergraduate), but contain no other information.

#### **Robert Trent Jones, Inc. (papers of)**

C/o Coral Ridge Country Club

Fort Lauderdale, FL

(954) 564-1271

Joe Fitzgerald

Contacted Mr. Fitzgerald to search in the papers for information on the Putting Green. He did some research into the papers and spoke to unidentified individuals who remembered the putting green project.

#### **Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park Library**

Elm Street, Carriage Barn Visitor Center

Woodstock, Vermont 05901

Janet Houghton (802) 457-3368, x.12

Reviewed copies of Billings Farm Fiscal Records (copy), Billings Farm Memo Diary (copy), maps, plans, aerial photographs, park planning documents, and published secondary sources; received print-outs of landscape entries in Janet Houghton's Mac database. Janet Houghton also provided valuable research assistance and guidance into the Billings Family Archives, as well as information on the Billings family tree, and her personal recollections about the Mansion grounds from her many years of work there.

#### **Morris County Park Commission Headquarters (NCPC)**

Frelinghausen Arboretum

P.O. Box 1295

Morristown, NJ 07962-1295

Renee Nissivoccia (973) 829-8513

The MCPC holds the papers of Martha Brookes (Brown) Hutcheson. Ms. Nissivoccia, who is the curator for the Park Commission, looked through the collection for reference to the Billings estate and found nothing, except for an entry on Hutcheson's list of commissions. She did not, however, look through the uncatalogued photographic images in the Hutcheson collection (may warrant further research, not undertaken).

**New York Botanical Garden**

Stephen Sinon

Reference Librarian

Bronx, NY 10458-5126

*libref@nybg.org*

The New York Botanical Garden Library holds the records of the Lord & Burnham Company (including records recently acquired from Rough Brothers [successor to Lord & Burnham] in Dayton, Ohio). The client records for Billings show that architectural plans were held in folio 630, but this was probably lost in a fire at the firm. Susan Fraser, Special Collections Librarian, sent copies in 1992 to Janet Houghton (MABI) of correspondence between Frederick Billings and Lord & Burnham concerning the greenhouse and potting shed addition completed in 1882.

**North American Rock Garden Society**

Marnie Flook, Archivist

23746 Lovely Lane

Chestertown, MD 21620

*www.nargs.org, MMFWMF@aol.com*

Zenon Schreiber was a long-time member of the [North American Rock Garden Society. Ms. Flook sent two articles on Schreiber that were published in the NARGS's Bulletin. The society's archives are located at the New York Botanical Garden, but were not researched for this project.

**Norman Williams Public Library, Woodstock, Vermont**

10 South Park Street

(802) 457-2295

According to librarian Kathy Ludwig, the Norman Williams Public Library has no primary or secondary materials relating to the landscape of the Mansion grounds. The library has an important c.1859 framed wall map of Windsor County by Presdee & Edwards that shows the Mansion grounds.

**Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation (OCLP)**

99 Warren Street

Brookline, MA 02146

(617) 566-1689

OCLP provided research materials and graphics compiled for two previous research projects at MABI: "Land Use

History for Marsh-Billings National Historical Park" (Foulds, Lacy, and Meier, 1994); and "Carriage Barn and Setting Cultural Landscape Report for Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park" (Coffin and Foulds, 1997). OCLP is also a source for studies that explored similar historic contexts, including Longfellow and Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Sites.

**Paramus (New Jersey) Public Library**

website: <http://web2.bccls.org/web2>

Contacted for information on Zenon Schreiber; received obituary from Bergen Records, 9 January 1989.

**Peabody Essex Museum**

Phillips Library, East India Square

Salem, Massachusetts 01970

(800) 745-4054

The library contains some Copeland records in the papers of E. Bowditch, Copeland's successor. According to Dan Nadenicek, who has researched this repository for materials related to Copeland and the Billings estate, these papers tell of times that Copeland went to Woodstock, but there are no specifics on his design of the Mansion grounds or relationship with Frederick Billings.

**Phillips Academy**

Andover, Massachusetts

Ruth Quaddlebaum, archivist

(970) 749-4000

As noted in the bibliography of Keith Morgan's *Shaping an American Landscape*, Phillips Andover contains the "Papers of the Platt Office, Private Collection." This collection, however, only contains papers relative to Platt's designs at Phillips Academy.

**Rhode Island School of Design**

Andrew Martinez, Archivist

2 College Street

Providence, RI 02903-2784

(401) 454-6100

The Catalog of Landscape Records at Wave Hill indicates that RISD holds records of Ellen Biddle Shipman in its Lowthorpe records. Andrew Martinez searched the



records, which are mostly administrative, and found no professional papers of Shipman or references to MABI.

#### **Rockefeller Archive Center**

*Ken Rose archive@mail.rockefeller.edu*

Assistant to the Director

15 Dayton Avenue, Pocantico Hills

North Tarrytown, NY 10591-1598

(914) 631-4505

The web database indicates no records of Laurance or Mary French Rockefeller. The Archive Center does not make available information or material pertaining to living members of the Rockefeller family or their property. Mr. Rockefeller's death in 2004 may therefore allow research into materials at the Archive Center pertaining to the mansion grounds that were not available for this project.

#### **Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site**

RR 3, Box 73

Cornish, NH 03745

John Dryfhout, Superintendent

The Catalog of Landscape Records at Wave Hill indicated that Saint-Gaudens NHS has records of Ellen Biddle Shipman. According to Superintendent Dryfhout, the site has no manuscripts and nothing related to Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park.

#### **Skyline Nursery**

1541 Route 143

Springfield, VT

(802) 885-4090

Dick Stevens, Jr.

Skyline Nursery has been doing work at the Mansion grounds for many years; they have old photographs of their work for the Rockefellers moving the white pine onto the Mansion lawn in 1967 (not examined), and possibly some old papers. The papers are unorganized and inaccessible according to Dick Stevens, and were therefore not researched for this project.

#### **Smithsonian Institution Libraries**

Horticultural Branch, Archives of American Gardens

Arts & Industries Building, Room 2282

900 Jefferson Drive SW

Washington, D.C. 20560-0420

*libmail@sil.si.edu*

The Catalog of Landscape Records at Wave Hill lists the Smithsonian as a repository of Shipman records. Received references to secondary sources on Shipman, Hutcheson and Platt from Valerie J. Wheat, Branch Librarian; but no references to the Billings Estate.

#### **Syracuse University**

Bird and Moon (SUNY ESF) Libraries

Syracuse, NY 13210

These libraries were used as a direct and inter library loan source for published materials.

#### **United States Department of Agriculture**

Ottawaquechee Soil and Water Conservation District

White River Junction, Vermont

(802) 295-7942

Soils and wetland maps.

#### **University of Pennsylvania**

Nancy M. Shawcross

Curator of Manuscripts

Rare Book & Manuscript Library

Philadelphia 19104 (215) 898-7088

*shawcros@pobox.upenn.edu*

The Catalog of Landscape Records at Wave Hill indicates that the University of Pennsylvania holds records of Charles Platt in its Van Pelt-Dietrich Library Center. According to Ms. Shawcross, the library holds no such records.

#### **University of Oregon**

Knight Library, Special Collections and University Archives

Eugene, OR 97403

(541) 346-3068

The Catalog of Landscape Records at Wave Hill lists the University of Oregon as a repository of Ellen Shipman records. According to Judith Tankard, The Gardens of Ellen Biddle Shipman (1996), the University of Oregon collection only concerns Shipman's projects associated with Edith Schyver.

**University of Vermont**

Bailey-Howe Library Special Collections

Burlington, VT

Elizabeth H. Dow *edow@zoo.uvm.edu*

Source for George Perkins Marsh Papers, 1812-1929. Researched papers relative to Woodstock that were selected for preparation of the Carriage Barn Cultural Landscape Report (1996). Papers included correspondence of Charles Marsh Jr., Caroline Crane Marsh, and Frederick Billings. Corresponded with Ms. Dow, who entered all of Marsh's papers on-line; she does not remember any pertaining to the estate, but did recommend looking at correspondence between Marsh and his brother, Charles Marsh, Jr. (these papers were included in the Carriage Barn CLR copies).

**Vermont Historical Society**

Library, Pavilion Building

109 State Street

Montpelier, VT 05609-0901

Paul Carnahan, Librarian (802) 828-2291

Requested information on Marsh/Billings estate; received copies of photographs and index of entries for Frederick Billings from the Canfield papers. None of the entries or photographs was relevant to the Mansion grounds. The "Land Use History for Marsh-Billings National Historical Park" (1994) indicated that the Society held no records with specific information on the Mansion grounds.

**Vermont, State of, Agency of Transportation**

Scott Gurley

133 State Street, State Administration Building

Montpelier, Vermont 05633

(802) 828-3982

Contacted regarding history of Route 12. The VAOT's records on Route 12 in the vicinity of MABI are limited to a "Route Log and Progress Chart" with information dating back to 1932.

**Vermont, State of, Division for Historic Preservation**

Nancy Boone, National Register Unit

(802) 828-3211

Contacted regarding National Register nomination forms

for properties in Vermont with relevant historic contexts, including Hildene, Shelburne Farms, and "Agricultural Resources of Vermont" Multiple Properties Documentation Form.

Giovanna Peebles, State Archeologist

(802) 828-3050

Contacted regarding known archeological sites and sensitivity of Mansion grounds and vicinity for prehistoric archeological resources.

**Vermont, State of, Geological Survey**

103 S. Main Street, Laundry Building

Waterbury, VT 05671-0301

(802) 241-3608

Received state-published geological survey (soil and bedrock) information for Woodstock.

**Wave Hill**

Catalog of Landscape Records

Chris Panos

Contacted for information on repositories relevant to Robert Morris Copeland, Charles A. Platt, Martha Brookes (Brown) Hutcheson, Ellen Biddle Shipman, Zenon Schreiber, and Brian Lynch.

**Westport Historical Society**

Barbara Roy, Andrea

25 Avery Place

Westport, Connecticut 06880

(203) 222-1424

Contacted for information on Theodor Muller, Architect, whose office was on the Post Road in Westport. The Society has no material on Muller.

**Woodstock Historical Society**

26 Elm Street

Woodstock, Vermont 05091

(802) 457-1822

Marie McAndrew-Taylor

The Woodstock Historical Society has two vertical files on the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller estate; most of the information in the files consists of 1980s-1990s newspaper clippings. The Society does have historic photographs of the

estate, primarily from the nineteenth century, including views of the Mansion and panoramas of the estate from Mount Peg, and several from the 1950s-1970s.

#### **Woodstock Inn & Resort (Woodstock Resort Corporation)**

14 The Green

Woodstock, VT 05091

John Wannop, Office of the Comptroller (802) 457-6640: Contacted regarding financial records for the Mansion grounds, per the suggestion of Roy Thomas of Resortscapes, Inc. According to John Wannop, bills for work at the Mansion grounds have been paid through the Resort since about 1985; prior to that time, bills were paid through Mr. Rockefeller's New York City office. The Resort began taking a more active role in the Mansion grounds in 1991, when Carl Bergstrom, the caretaker / gardener since 1949, went into semi-retirement.

Phil Lewis, Office of Property Operations and Maintenance: (802) 457-6653: Phil Lewis managed grounds operations at the Mansion following Carl Bergstrom's retirement in 1991 until National Park Service took over in 1998, except for the hillside gardens which Bergstrom continued to maintain up until 1997. Lewis' work included pest control and maintenance of the lawns, flower gardens, and shrubs. The Inn presently has no plans, receipts, or other records pertaining to the Mansion grounds; those relevant to the Mansion grounds were transferred to MABI maintenance division and library.

#### **Woodstock Town Hall**

33 The Green

Woodstock, Vermont 05091

Clerk's Office

Town Records (deeds); reviewed Record of Roads and Town Reports.

Lister's Office

(802) 457-3611

Current property tax maps, assessment records dating back to the 1940s.

Town Manager's Office

Phil Swanson, Town Manager

(802) 457-3456

Contacted re records on Route 12/Elm Street, which is a state route but is maintained by the town within the

village limits. According to Mr. Swanson, the Town of Woodstock does not have any records on Elm Street adjacent to the Mansion aside from plans made for the reconstruction of the Elm Street Bridge in 1978/1979. There was a proposal to realign the road as part of this project, but it was rejected by the town. Mr. Swanson does not recall any major reconstruction of the road in recent history.

### **INDIVIDUAL CONTACTS**

#### **Mimi Bergstrom**

Woodstock, Vermont

Mimi Bergstrom is the widow of long-time estate gardener Carl Bergstrom. She talked about her memories of the grounds dating back to their arrival in 1949. She also provided some photographs from 1950s and 1960s, as well as later photographs of the grounds during the 1980s and 1990s.

#### **Polly Hitchcock Bigham**

Evansville, Indiana

Polly Bigham is a granddaughter of Mary Montagu Billings French and spent all of her summers from her birth in 1945 through 1961 living at the Mansion grounds. She provided general stories and details about the landscape as it was during her grandmother's day and as it transitioned over to the Rockefellers during the 1950s.

#### **Connie Hitchcock**

Woodstock, Vermont

Connie Hitchcock is a granddaughter of Mary Montagu Billings French and spent all of her summers from her birth in 1940 through 1961 living at the Mansion grounds. She provided her recollections about the landscape as it was during her grandmother's day and as it transitioned over to the Rockefellers during the 1950s.

#### **Janet Houghton**

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park

Woodstock, Vermont

(802) 457-3368, x.12

Janet Houghton worked as curator for the Rockefeller's Mansion collections from 1975-1979 and 1985-1997, and subsequently transitioned to service as curator for the National Park Service with opening of the park in 1998. She

provided recollections over this twenty-five year period, as well as guidance and reference to the Billings Family Archives and the park's historical databases.

#### **Ann Lynch**

Norwich, Vermont

Ann Lynch is the widow of Bryan Lynch, the landscape architect who worked for the Rockefellers on the Mansion grounds from the 1960s through the 1980s. Mrs. Lynch provided some general recollections about her husband's career and work for the Rockefellers.

#### **Keith N. Morgan**

Professor of Art History

Boston University

725 Commonwealth Ave

(617) 353-1441

Professor Morgan is an authority on the work of Charles Platt, and has published several books on the subject, including *Architecture and Landscapes of Charles A. Platt* (1975), *Charles A. Platt: The Artist as Architect* (1985), and *Shaping an American Landscape: The Art and Architecture of Charles A. Platt* (1995). Prof. Morgan has never come across a reference to the Billings estate in any of his research, which has included major repositories of Platt material, including Columbia and the Century Association. He reviewed the plans of the Flower Garden and Long Terrace (Long Border), which he concluded must be the work of Platt, and discussed their relation to the larger body of Platt's work.

#### **Helen Muller**

Westport, Connecticut

Helen Muller is the widow of architect Theodor Muller. She provided general background on her husband's professional training and work; she immediately recalled his work for Laurance Rockefeller at the "Billings Mansion," but did not know any specifics about his work there. She said her husband worked up until he died in 1990, but did not know what happened to his professional papers.

#### **Kim Murray**

Horticulturist

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park  
Woodstock, Vermont

(802) 457-3368 x33

Kim has worked on the Mansion grounds for many years prior to establishment of the National Historical Park, initially as an employee for Skyline Nursery, and later for the Woodstock Resort Corporation between 1983 and 1998. He provided information on the recent history of the Mansion grounds.

#### **Dan Nadenicek**

Pennsylvania State University

State College, Pennsylvania

(814) 865-9511

Dan has been developing a study entitled, "Frederick Billings and the Intellectual and Practical Influences on Forest Planting, 1840-1890," which includes research into Robert Morris Copeland and Billings family diaries, among many other sources. Dan provided direction for research on Copeland and in the Billings diaries.

#### **Charles Platt II**

Platt Byard Dovell Architects

19 Union Square West

New York, New York

(212) 691-2440

Charles Platt II was contacted at the suggestion of Keith Morgan for information on Jack Platt, the brother of Charles A. Platt, who was a friend of the Billings and was apparently involved in design at Woodstock and the Madison Avenue houses. Mr. Platt provided some background on Jack Platt, but did not remember hearing of anything specific about the Billings family.

#### **Jim Sawyer**

Woodstock Resort Corporation

Property Operations Division

Woodstock, Vermont

Jim Sawyer worked with Carl Bergstrom on the Mansion grounds for approximately twenty years and subsequently as an employee of the Woodstock Resort Corporation, living for many years in the Double Cottage. He declined to share his memories about the landscape.

**Nadia Schreiber Smith**

North Ferrisberg, Vermont

Nadia Smith provided information about the life and work of her father, landscape designer Zenon Schreiber, as well as some of her own recollections about the Mansion grounds, which she visited as a child with her father. Papers from her father survive in the family home in New Jersey, but are not presently accessible.

were under the management of Carl Bergstrom. John did design and build the Woodland Garden and managed the woodlands on the hill in the vicinity of the Mansion.

**Jane McDill Smith**

Woodstock, Vermont

Jane McDill Smith is the granddaughter of Laura Billings Lee. Mrs. Smith provided access to photographs of the Mansion grounds during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Mrs. Smith also conveyed her memories of the Mansion grounds during the 1930s and 1940s.

**Judith Tankard**

Newton, Massachusetts

Judith Tankard is a landscape historian who published a major study of Ellen Biddle Shipman. She reviewed the Shipman plans for Terrace Gardens and provided comments on their relationship to Shipman's other commissions.

**Roy Thomas**

Resortscapes, Inc.

Woodstock, Vermont

Roy Thomas, through his Resortscapes firm, managed the maintenance, annual plantings, and design work at the Mansion grounds between 1992 and 1997, and has provided contractual services to the National Park Service since 1998 for the upkeep of the herbaceous beds, shrubs, and other features on the Mansion grounds. Mr. Thomas has been associated with the Rockefellers since 1966 and has been familiar with the Mansion grounds since coming to Woodstock in 1980. He maintains files on work at the Mansion grounds dating back to 1992.

**John Wiggin**

Forestry Consultant

White River Junction, Vermont

John Wiggin was the forest manager for the Rockefellers from 1972 through 1997. He did not have any direct oversight of the formal grounds around the Mansion, which

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