Appendix B – CPA Final Application Form

[CPC Use Only]	Date Received: 11.10.26	Received By: M. Moore	Assigned CPC #: 2028- 12

This form may be copied. Please type or print clearly, answer all questions, use "N/A" if not applicable. Use additional paper as needed.

1-A Applicant Information

Last Name: Theall	First Name: Aubrey
Organization(s)(as appropriate) Groton Historical Commission	

1-B **Regional Project? YES** ☐ **NO** ■ | If YES, Town/Organization:

2 Submission Date: 11/10/26

3 Applicant Address

Street: 197 Maple Avenue	City: Groton	State: MA	Zip: 01450

4	Phone: 617-314-5755	Email: aubreytheall@hotmail.com

5 CPA Purpose (Check all that apply)

Affordable Housing: ☐	Community Housing: ☐	Historic Preservation: ■
Open Space: ☐	Recreation: ☐	

As per MA General Law Chapter 44B, proposed historic projects that are not on the structures listed on the state's Registry of Historic Places require a determination by the Groton Historic Commission that the proposed project is of historic significance.

6 Town Committee or Boards Participating: Groton Historical Commission

7 Project Address/Property Owner's Name: Gibbet Hill Farm, LLC

8 Project Name: Bancroft Castle Preservation Phase III

9 Additional Responsible Parties (If applicable)

Role (specify)	Name	Address	Phone	Email
Property/Site Owner	Gibbet Hill Farm, LLC	32 Birch Hill Road, Newton, MA 02465		webberjosh@hotmail.com
Project Manager	Aubrey Theall	197 Maple Avenue, Groton, MA 01450	617-314-5755	aubreytheall@hotmail.com
Lead Architect				
Project Contractor	TBD			
Project Consultants	Cirrus Structural Engineering	19 Lower Woodland Terrace, Columbia, CT 6237	800-337-0200	cirrus@cirruseng.com
Other:				
Other:				

10 As appropriate, indicate if proposal requires:

P&S Agreement: ☐ Deed: ☐ Option Agreement: ☐ Memorandum of Understanding: ☐

Other: ☐ Describe: N/A

11-A Assessor Info (Map/Block/Lot ID(s)): 116/3/1//

11-B Tax Classification Type: 1320

12 Permits required:

Zoning: ☐ Historic Preservation: ☐ Other: ■ Building Inspector has confirmed no construction permit needed

13 Historic Commission Approval Signoff (When Required): Obtained Date: 1/22/25

14-A Project Cost: $ $250,000 Estimate: ■ Professional Quote: ☐

14-B Requested from CPC: $ 250,000

14-C Committed from OTHER Source: $

If applicable:

Annual Anticipated Total Income: $ N/A

Annual Anticipated Total Expense: $

Anticipated Net Income (Loss): $

Name of Estimator/Company: Cirrus Structural Engineering

15 CCP Objectives - Use CODES from Section 5 to indicate all that apply

5.1.2

16 Project Timelines

Proposed State Date:	Projected Complete Date:
7/1/27	12/31/28

17 Estimated Delivery Date of Completion Report to CPC: 12/31/28

18 Project Description and Explanation (Attach Additional Sheets as Needed)

See attached narrative project summary.

19 Feasibility

See attached for examples of similar successful CPA funded projects.

20 List of Attachments

A. Narrative project summary.
B. Letters of support (forthcoming).
C. List of similar CPA funded projects.
D. Project budget estimate from Cirrus Structural Engineering (forthcoming).

21 Additional Information

See attached project sumary.

22 Management Plan

See attached project summary.

23 Signature

Applicant Signature:	Date: 11/10/26
Co-Applicant Signature:	Date:
Co-Applicant Signature:	Date:

Introduction:

The "castle" on Gibbet Hill, one of Groton's most recognizable landmarks, was created starting in 1904 for Gen. William Amos Bancroft, a Groton native who became president of the Boston Elevated Railway in 1899. It was intended to be the stables and carriage house for his Shawfieldmont estate, an adjunct to the mansion planned for the crest of the hill but never built. Despite its old-world appearance, the castle contained plumbing and electricity, and was built with modern formed concrete. In 1906, Bancroft had parts of the interior finished off to be used as a seasonal residence for his family.

Bancroft sold the property in 1912, and two years later, the castle found a new use as a long-term recovery hospital run by Dr. Harold W. Ayres, which focused on tuberculosis patients, and after a government contract in 1920, on World War I veterans. The hospital closed in 1928, and the next year, the property was rented to the elite Groton Hunt Club for use as their clubhouse. However, on the evening of July 4, 1930, trespassers on the property set off firecrackers, catching the castle on fire, and the wood portion of the structure was a total loss.

In 2000, Groton residents Steve and Nancy Webber purchased the castle along with Gibbet Hill to preserve it from development. In 2002, a conservation restriction and easement were placed on the property, which allowed the castle to be open to the public.

Although minimal restoration was made to the ruins at the time they became accessible to the public, ongoing deterioration of the structure has continued for more than 90 years since the fire in 1930.

Proposal:

This proposal would fund the third phase of the Bancroft Castle preservation project.

The Groton Historical Commission, with the support of the Webber family (property owner), was previously awarded a grant to engage a qualified structural engineering firm to assess the stability of the remains of the Bancroft Castle atop Gibbet Hill and to develop and plan to extend its lifespan. That study was done and a plan was developed to stabilize and slow the rate of decay of the Castle.

We were subsequently awarded a CPA grant to undertake the first phase of actual preservation work. This will address urgent structural stability and public safety issues on the site. That project is being bid out as this application is being prepared with work planned to begin in the spring of 2027 once the ground firms up.

This second round of preservation work (and third phase of the project) would extend the useful lifespan of the Castle ruin. This work will include (but not be limited to) the tightening of masonry and sealing of skyward facing surfaces, cracks, mortar joints, vegetation removal, etc. This will materially slow the rate of decay of the ruin. The effects of vegetation growth, water intrusion and freeze/thaw cycles are the greatest threats to the Castle's ongoing stability.

Internal

In addition to being an important historical landmark the Castle is one of the most popular attractions in the Town of Groton. Its continued existence is beneficial to people of Groton, visitors to Town and local businesses that benefit from the many tourists that visit each year. The Castle site (and the trails used to reach it) have permanent, deeded public access. Further, the Historical Commission (as part of Phase I) entered into a grant/clawback agreement with the property owner to safecguard the public's investment in the ruin.

We expect to again receive financial support from the Webber family (who has very limited access to the site for events) to further leverage the public's investment (amount being confirmed).

Costs:

The cost of Phase III of this project is estimated at $250,000, including contingency & engineering/consulting fees. (note this estimate is being refined by the engineering firm and is not final).

Management Plan:

GHC Chair Aubrey Theall would work with Cirrus Structural Engineering (serving as consultant). Should this project be approved at the Spring 2027 Town Meeting we expect completion prior to December 31, 2028 (18 months).

Execution risk for this project is lower than the prior phase as the approval of MA DCR and the Groton Conservation Commission have been obtained, MA Historical Commission has made a determination of "No Adverse Impact" and the necessary historic preservation restriction was negotiated and filed at the Registry of Deeds in advance of the first preservation project.

Previous CPA funded projects:

The Groton Historical Commission has successfully completed numerous CPA funded projects, a listing of which is attached as Exhibit A.

Conformance to CPA allowable spending chart:

"Section 2 of the CPA legislation defines historic resources, preservation, and rehabilitation. Under CPA, an historic resource is defined as a building, structure, vessel, real property, document or artifact that is either:

- listed on the State Register of Historic Places; or
- determined by the local Historic Commission to be significant in the history, archeology, architecture, or culture of the city or town.

CPA funds may be spent on the acquisition, preservation, rehabilitation and restoration of historic resources."

Internal

The sponsorship of this application by the Historical Commission serves as its determination of historical significance of the structure. A formal vote of the Historical Commission confirming the historical and architectural significant of the structure and indicating support of this project will be taken on January 22, 2025.

Summary:

The Bancroft Castle is a well-known and much loved piece of Groton's history that is deteriorating and without intervention will continue to deteriorate. In addition to its historical and scenic significance the Castle is an economic driver for the Town of Groton. A large number of visitors come to Groton to visit the site each year.

Respectfully submitted:

Aubrey Theall, Chair, Groton Historical Commission
aubreytheall@hotmail.com

Internal

C (similar successful CPA projects)

Gloucester, MA- Hammond Castle, 3/12/24

Restoration, sealing of masonry building façade to stop structural damage.

Grafton, MA- Stone Arch Bridge, 5/14/07

Repair and restoration of a stone arch bridge in North Grafton.

Fall River, MA- Oak Grove Cemetery, 6/23/15

Repair of masonry and ironwork, historic granite entry arch at cemetery.

Fall River, MA- Bank Street Armory, 8/11/20

Urgent masonry repair and vegetation removal.

Salem, MA- Fort Pickering/Winter Island, 6/19/16

Masonry restoration and vegetation removal.

West Bridgewater- War Memorial Park, 6/13/11

Masonry repair in War Memorial Park

Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

Scanned Record Cover Page



Inventory No:	GRO.960
Historic Name:	Bancroft's Castle
Common Name:	Shawfieldmont Bungalow Ruins
Address:	Lowell Rd
City/Town:	Groton
Village/Neighborhood:	
Local No:	
Year Constructed:	1906
Architect(s):	Dodge, George H.; Low, Frederic F.; Ripley and Russell;
Use(s):	Abandoned or Vacant; Agricultural; Hospital; Out Building; Secondary Dwelling House; Single Family Dwelling House;
Significance:	Agriculture; Architecture; Conservation; Landscape Architecture; Recreation; Social History;
Area(s):	GRO.I
Designation(s):	
Building Materials:	
Demolished	No

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Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125
www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc

This file was accessed on: Tuesday, November 10, 2026 at 2:26 PM

FORM F – STRUCTURE

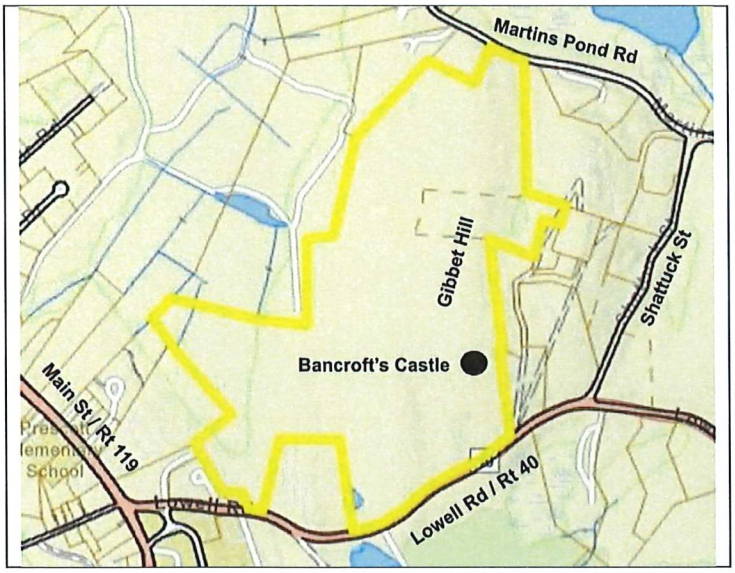
MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Assessor's Number	USGS Quad	Area(s)	Form Number
116-3.1	AYER	I	GRO.960

Photograph



Locus Map



Town/City: Groton

Place *(neighborhood or village):* Gibbet Hill, overlooking Groton Center

Address or Location: Access near 145 Lowell Rd

Name: Bancroft's Castle / Shawfieldmont Bungalow

Ownership: ☐ *Public* ☒ *Private* with public access

Type of Structure ***(check one):***

___ boat or ship
___ canal
___ carousel
___ dam
___ fort
___ gate
___ kiln
___ lighthouse
_x_ other *(specify)* Ruin
___ pound
___ powderhouse
___ street
_x_ tower
___ tunnel
_x_ wall
___ windmill

Date of Construction: 1906

Source: Newspaper articles; date above fireplace

Architect, Engineer or Designer:
Architects Ripley & Russell and F. F. Low

Materials: Fieldstone over formed concrete and brick

Alterations *(with dates):*
-1915, addition on south of enclosed sunporch (stone walls underneath still stand).
-Burned July 4, 1930.

Condition: Fair

Moved: ☒ **no** ☐ **yes** **Date:**

Acreage: 90.81

Setting: Alone on partially wooded hilltop of Gibbet Hill, a prominent natural landmark overlooking Groton Center with commanding views of the countryside and mountains to the west and north.

Recorded by: Joshua R. Vollmar
Organization: Groton Historical Commission
Date *(month / year):* December 2025

RECEIVED
DEC 15 2025
MASS. HIST. COMM.

☒ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.
If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

DESIGN ASSESSMENT

Describe important design features and evaluate in terms of other structures within the community.

Bancroft's Castle, originally called the Shawfieldmont Bungalow, is the open-air ruin of a structure built with the intention of functioning as stables and a carriage house, but used initially as a summer home and converted to a hospital in 1914. Much of the structure was built of wood, which burned on July 4, 1930. The ruins are located on the southwest slope of Gibbet Hill, a short distance south of the summit. Gibbet Hill is a glacial-formed drumlin with two crests – the one near the castle is slightly lower than the one of which the town reservoir sits, which is northeast of the former, and is the third-highest point in the town of Groton, at approximately 516 feet above sea level. The hill is a short distance east of and overlooks the center village, making it one of the most prominent natural landmarks in Groton.[1]

The Shawfieldmont Bungalow was built in the Tudor Revival style, with half-timbered detailing (which burned) and stonework meant to evoke a late-medieval castle; it was said to have been based on a castle in southern England.[2] The structure is approached via a trail over a permanent conservation easement, which allows public access. The primary trailhead is on Lowell Road (Route 40), which approaches the ruins from the south, with a secondary access from Shattuck St. The ruins are primarily composed of concrete, which forms the structural components. It is faced with locally sourced fieldstone on all surfaces that were originally intended to be exposed.

The castle is composed of four primary structural masses: (1) the tower, at the northwest corner of the main block. (2) the main block, which runs east-west. (3) the south wing, which extends from the western end of the main block. (4) the sunroom addition, built in 1915, which extends from the south end of the south wing.

The most distinctive feature of the ruins is the three-story tower (1) at the northeast corner. It is octagonal, with openings on all three floors that originally functioned as windows and doors; inside, the remains of fireplaces can be seen on the first and second levels, but the floor divisions are now only marked by the charred remains of framing in the joint slots in the concrete structure. It cantilevers out at the third floor with two courses of rounded granite framing three narrow window openings on five of the eight sides (one side has a door, the other two – including the chimney wall – are blind). The tower is crowned by crenellations, with two narrow openings evenly spaced on each side. Part of a flagpole remains atop the tower.

The main block (2) is surrounded primarily by one-story walls (except the tower). Throughout most of the wing, the concrete floor is at ground level. A large opening leads towards the south wing, which is now blocked with a modern iron fence added after 2000. Openings include wide doorways at the east and west ends; two doorways into the tower, five window openings on the north wall (the western two being taller than the other three); and three window openings on the south wall.

The floor of the south wing (3) is at the basement level, so from inside, the surrounding walls appear to be two stories in height (less outside due to the slope of the hill), except for the north wall where the wing joins the main block, which is one story. The south wall features a large fieldstone fireplace topped with a tall stone chimney on what was originally the first floor. In the mantle above the fireplace, inset stones spell out "1906," the year the structure was completed. Within the walls of the lower level can be found piping from the original plumbing. Openings include doorways on either side of the fireplace leading to the sunroom addition at both the basement and first floor levels, and a window opening on the both the east and west walls at the first-floor level.

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[1] Samuel A. Green, *The Natural History and Topography of Groton, Massachusetts, Together with Other Material Relating to the History of the Town* (Cambridge, MA: John Wilson and Son, 1912), 54, 99.
[2] "Groton Show Place Burned to Ground," *Lowell Courier-Citizen* (Lowell, MA), July 5, 1930.

The sunroom addition (4) now only exists at the basement level as walls extending from the end of the south wing. This is the first elevation seen when approaching the castle from Lowell Road. Originally, a glass-enclosed sunporch was set atop the walls. The addition was made in 1915 for the use of the hospital.[3] Inside this wing, on the side walls, the stepped pattern of the original abutments can be seen, on top of which the wing was added.

The primary façade faces west, towards the view of the mountains. There is a large gap in the center (originally the front entrance) with a low stone wall in front, framing the original entrance porch. The two sections of this wall are terminated in the center by square posts, originally capped with granite blocks, which once held the wood posts that supported a roofline over this entrance porch.

Open to the public since 2002, Bancroft's Castle is today a top tourist destination in Groton.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Explain the history of the structure and how it relates to the development of the community.

Bancroft's Castle, originally called the Shawfieldmont Bungalow, was constructed mostly in 1906 for Major General William Amos Bancroft (1855-1922).[4] The structure sits on Gibbet Hill, a prominent landmark in Groton from the town's early days that was named before the first town records were kept in 1662.[5] The name of the hill has caused significant speculation over the centuries, as a gibbet is a device used for hangings. At least three separate legends arose because of this, all by the nineteenth century: that a Native American was executed on the hill in the town's early years; that alleged witches were hanged on the hill during the Salem Witch Trials era; and the most elaborate, that a pirate was hung in chains from a tree and left to die slowly. However, there is no evidence that any execution ever took place on Gibbet Hill.[6] In all likelihood, the hill was actually named after a hill in England. There are many hills in England that bear the moniker (usually from the presence of an actual gibbet), and there would not have been time nor reason to build one in Groton before 1662, when the settlement had barely begun.[7]

Gibbet Hill was divided into a number of parcels, owned in conjunction with nearby farms, throughout much of the town's history. That changed when Gen. Bancroft came into the picture. Bancroft was a Groton native, born in a house that stood on the site of 176 Main Street (GRO.356). His parents were Charles and Lydia Emeline (Spaulding) Bancroft. The Bancroft family had been prominent in town for several generations. An uncle of Gen. Bancroft, Dr. Amos Bigelow Bancroft, built a house across the street from his birthplace (GRO.148). The general's grandfather Dr. Amos Bancroft was Groton's leading physician for a generation, and in 1811, he purchased the house that would become W. A. Bancroft's birthplace. The general's father Charles Bancroft was a gentleman farmer, living primarily on the wealth he inherited. After Charles passed away in 1873, the family home was sold to George S. Boutwell, who lived next door (GRO.4); it was subsequently split into two pieces and moved to the end of Court Street (GRO.321 and GRO.324).[8]

William Amos Bancroft was educated in Groton's public schools, at Lawrence Academy (GRO.B), and Phillips Exeter Academy in Exeter, NH. He attended Harvard College, where he was captain of the crew team, graduating in 1878 and entering Harvard

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[3] "Groton Hospital of Unique Type," *Boston Globe*, August 22, 1915.
[4] "William Amos Bancroft (1855-1922)," Find a Grave, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/115574406/william-amos-bancroft.
[5] Samuel A. Green, *Groton During the Indian Wars* (Cambridge, MA: John Wilson and Son, 1883), 192.
[6] Samuel A. Green, *Groton Historical Series* (Cambridge, MA: John Wilson and Son, 1887), 1: no. XV, 8; Charles Emil Ruckstuhl, *Forgotten Tales of Groton, 1646-1941* (Groton, MA: Self-published, Charles Ruckstuhl, 2001), chapter 12; John Keep Nutting, *Nutting Genealogy: A Record of Some of the Descendants of John Nutting, of Groton, Mass.* (Syracuse, NY: C. W. Bardeen, 1908), 27-30, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=loc.ark:/13960/t7br8tg8h&view=1up&seq=13; Joshua Young, letter to the editor, *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), February 20, 1892, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=gibbet&i=f&d=01011869-12311949&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_18920220_english_2&df=51&dt=60&cid=3140. See also Joshua Vollmar, "What's in a Name? The Many Bloody Legends of Gibbet Hill Are, Alas, Pure Fantasy," *Groton Herald* (Groton, MA), June 24, 2022.
[7] Green, *Natural History*, 117-118.
[8] Green, *Historical Series*, 1: no. XVII, 1-9; Samuel A. Green, *Groton Historical Series* (Cambridge, MA: John Wilson and Son, 1893), 3: 18-20.

Continuation sheet 2

Law School. After being admitted to the Suffolk Bar in 1881, Bancroft began the practice of law in Boston; his residence was in Cambridge.[9]

Bancroft joined the state militia (later the National Guard) as a private while a freshman at Harvard in 1875. He quickly worked his way up the ranks and was a brigadier general at the beginning of the Spanish-American War in 1898. During the war, he served in the regular army but was not in combat. Afterwards, he was accorded the rank of major general, and he retired from the state militia in 1901. Bancroft also had a political career in the Republican Party, serving on the Cambridge Common Council (1882), in the Massachusetts House of Representatives (1883-1885), as president of the Cambridge Board of Aldermen (1891-1892), and as Mayor of Cambridge (1893-1897).[10]

Bancroft's fortune came from his career in business. In 1885, he left his law practice to work as superintendent of the Cambridge Street Railway. At the time, greater Boston was served by a wide range of competing transportation companies. Street railways still used horses for locomotive power. But mergers were on the rise, and in 1887, the Cambridge Street Railway was acquired by the newly formed West End Railway Company, which took over all the city's streetcars. Bancroft was made roadmaster of the West End in 1888, and in that position, he oversaw the implementation of the first electric trolley in Boston. By the time he left the post in 1890, most of the company's lines had been electrified.[11]

Bancroft resumed the practice of law from 1890 to 1897 while pursuing his political career. Consolidation continued in the transportation industry, culminating in the formation of the Boston Elevated Railway Co., which was incorporated in 1894, initially to take over the privilege of building elevated track in Boston which the West End wasn't interested in. With the backing of J. P. Morgan and Eben P. Jordan (of the Jordan-Marsh Department Store) the company raised enough capital to exceed its original purpose – now, it aimed to take over the West End. For the legal negotiations that followed, Bancroft's law firm was appointed general counsel in 1896. The machination resulted in an act of the state legislature that allowed the Boston Elevated to lease the West End under conditions, and the West End was forced to agree to the lease in 1897. Bancroft was instrumental in the transaction, but a contemporary report glossed over this by stating, "it was natural that the native ability and acquired experience of the former superintendent of the Cambridge company should be sought." In 1897, as the Elevated consolidated its hold on all the track in and around Boston – including the first subway in North America – Bancroft assumed a management role. He was elected to the board of directors and appointed as vice president and general manager of the company in September 1897. As Bancroft became the leader of the Boston Elevated, he permanently left his law practice and political career.[12]

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[9] Green, *Historical Series*, 3: 257; Helen McCarthy Sawyer, *People and Places of Groton* (Self-published: H.M. Sawyer, 1986), 19-20; "Groton," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), February 11, 1893, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?i=f&by=1893&bdd=1890&d=01011869-12311948&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_18930211_english_2&df=21&dt=30&cid=3140.

[10] Green, *Historical Series*, 3: 257; "Gen. William A. Bancroft, Ex-Mayor of Cambridge," *Cambridge Sentinel* (Cambridge, MA), July 20, 1907; "Death Comes to Gen. Bancroft," *Boston Globe*, March 12, 1922, https://bostonglobe.newspapers.com/article/the-boston-globe/141419759/; "A Letter," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), June 18, 1898, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=bancroft&i=f&d=01011898-12311899&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_18980618_english_4&df=41&dt=50&cid=3140; "Groton," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), January 12, 1901, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=bancroft&i=f&d=01011900-12311903&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19010112_english_4&df=61&dt=70&cid=3140; *Who Was Who in America, Volume 1: 1897-1942* (Chicago: Marquis-Who's Who Inc., 1966), 53, https://archive.org/details/whowaswhoinameri01peri.

[11] Green, *Historical Series*, 3: 257; "Gen. William A. Bancroft, Ex-Mayor of Cambridge," *Cambridge Sentinel* (Cambridge, MA), July 20, 1907; "Death Comes to Gen. Bancroft," *Boston Globe*, March 12, 1922, https://bostonglobe.newspapers.com/article/the-boston-globe/141419759/.

[12] Green, *Historical Series*, 3: 257; "Gen. William A. Bancroft, Ex-Mayor of Cambridge," *Cambridge Sentinel* (Cambridge, MA), July 20, 1907; "Death Comes to Gen. Bancroft," *Boston Globe*, March 12, 1922, https://bostonglobe.newspapers.com/article/the-boston-globe/141419759/; "Groton," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), September 18, 1897, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=sears&i=f&d=01011893-12311907&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_18970918_english_4&df=171&dt=180&cid=3140; "Notes from the Archives: Tremont Street Subway," City of Boston, last updated October 30, 2025, https://www.boston.gov/news/notes-archives-tremont-street-subway; Frank Cheney and Anthony Mitchell Sammarco, *When Boston Rode the EL* (Charleston SC: Arcadia

Continuation sheet 3

At the end of 1899, Bancroft was chosen as president of the Boston Elevated Railway, the second person to hold the position (after William A. Gaston). At the time, the company operated some 3,000 cars and employed over 7,000 people, with control over all 370 miles of track in greater Boston – whether below or above grade. And this was before they had built the vast majority of the elevated system. It was the fourth largest street railway in the world, and the model for similar systems in the U.S. Bancroft held the office of president from 1899 through 1916, afterwards becoming chairman of the board; his salary at the end of his tenure as president was $36,000 per year, which became $25,000 as chairman until he fully retired in 1917. He was known for his military-style organization and management. A friend said of him, "He was quick to rebuke, but equally quick to reward success. He possessed an almost unlimited capacity for detail and his name was a synonym for rugged honesty and a square deal." Familiarity with the details was necessary to keep on top of what one newspaper described as "the greatest business enterprise in Boston." Bancroft was known for regularly traveling across the system in his private car, Number 101, and had his "finger on every nerve of the great system." The general's five-rule recipe for success – well-known among contemporaries – was 1. Honesty; 2. Industry; 3. Industry; 4. Industry; 5. Industry.[13]

Key milestones during Gen. Bancroft's time as president of the Boston Elevated include the debut of the elevated train in 1901; the completion of the East Boston Tunnel – the nation's first underwater mass transit tunnel – in 1904; and the invention of articulated streetcars in 1912 to 1913.[14] The most significant challenge during his tenure was the strike of 1912. Employees dissatisfied with working conditions had formed a union, which Bancroft and management refused to recognize; more than that, they discharged any employee they found joined the union. The strike was called at the beginning of June 1912 after Bancroft refused the union's demands. He fought the strike using a playbook he had successfully built back in 1887 – while he was still with the Cambridge Street Railway, almost all the company's workforce had walked off the job. Bancroft, by personally taking command, recruiting strikebreakers, and working around the clock, got the cars running in just three days; the strikers gave in. But the situation in 1912 wasn't anything like 25 years earlier, and Bancroft wasn't prepared for it. His strikebreakers weren't numerous enough to run all the cars and the strikers physically stopped them from working; a small group of strikers destroyed company property, causing Bancroft to respond with force that damaged his name; and finally – but most importantly – the press, which had sided with management in 1887, sided with the strikers in 1912. National labor leaders, including Samuel Gompers, came to Boston, and the government stepped in to keep the peace, reporting in favor of the demands of the strikers. Bancroft had no choice but to accept a compromise at the end of July 1912; as a result of the strike, the company reported its first annual net loss.[15]

Publishing, 2000), 8; *First Annual Report of the Directors of the Boston Elevated Railway Co., for the Year Ending September 30, 1898* (Boston: George H. Ellis, 1898), https://archives.lib.state.ma.us/entities/journalfile/352c6b8a-7199-4b66-bb94-49a744a43975.

[13] Sawyer, *People and Places*, 19-20; "How Gen. Bancroft Manages the Elevated Road," *Boston Herald*, June 8, 1902; "Boston Elevated Railway," February 1901, clipping in collection of Groton History Center, Groton, MA; *Who Was Who*, 53; "Gen. Bancroft's Car Now in the Way," *Boston Globe*, October 8, 1926; "Clipping," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), February 22, 1902, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=bancroft&i=f&d=01011900-12311903&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19020222_english_4&df=31&dt=40&cid=3140; Frank Cheney and Anthony M. Sammarco, *Boston in Motion* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 1999), 31-32, https://archive.org/details/bostoninmotionim00fran; *Third Annual Report of the Directors of the Boston Elevated Railway Co., for the Year Ending September 30, 1900* (Boston: George H. Ellis, 1900), 17-18, https://archives.lib.state.ma.us/entities/journalfile/b2e83997-247f-4819-9d97-a709060cb2a3; "Brush is Head of Elevated," *Boston Post*, September 16, 1916; "Vote Gen. Bancroft Not Worth $25,000," *Boston Globe*, November 7, 1916; "Wm. A. Bancroft's Letter to Elevated Stockholders," *Boston Globe*, November 5, 1917.

[14] Chronology, Boston Elevated Railway Company Library Records, Northeastern University Archives and Special Collections, Boston, https://archivesspace.library.northeastern.edu/repositories/2/resources/934.

[15] "Elevated Rejects Demand of Union," *Boston Post*, June 3, 1912; "Ad to the Elevated Railway Strike," June 11, 1912; "With Verbatim Reports of All the Speeches by Labor Leaders," *Boston Post*, June 17, 1912; "Report Supports Strikers' Stand," *Boston Post*, July 23, 1912; "Elevated is Willing to Settle the Strike," *Boston Post*, July 24, 1912; "Finis Written on Car Strike," *Boston Post*, July 30, 1912; "One Good Method," *Washington Herald* (Washington, DC), March 14, 1917; "History," Boston Carmen's Union Local 589, https://carmensunion589.org/about-us/3774-2/; *Fifteenth Annual Report of the Directors of the Boston Elevated Railway Co., 1912* (Boston: George H. Ellis, 1912), 8, https://archives.lib.state.ma.us/entities/journalfile/1c2fb9bb-474f-490a-8e51-711cc7217121. See also other reports of the company in the State Archives. For Bancroft and the 1887 strike, see "Gen. William A. Bancroft, Ex-Mayor of Cambridge," *Cambridge Sentinel* (Cambridge, MA), July 20, 1907; John C. Rand, *One of a Thousand: A Series of Biographical Sketches of One Thousand Representative Men Resident in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, A.D. 1888-'89* (Boston: First National Publishing Company, 1890), 35, https://www.google.com/books/edition/_/oeI-AAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0; *Biographical Review Volume XXVII: Containing Life Sketches*

Continuation sheet 4

Aside from his work at the Elevated, Gen. Bancroft was a director of the United States Trust Company and the Chelsea Trust Company; a trustee of Norwich University, Lawrence Academy, and Phillips Exeter Academy; and an overseer of Harvard College from 1893 until 1905.[16] He was married in 1879 to Mary Shaw (1857-1935), whose background is not well documented. A granddaughter, Mary Bancroft, recalled that her grandmother said she was born in Nova Scotia, but from the account of a woman who knew her before the marriage, she was from an Irish immigrant family and was working as a chambermaid in Boston when Bancroft was courting her. The granddaughter wrote: "For a man with my grandfather's background to have married an Irish-Catholic girl in those days could be compared to the son of a southern plantation owner marrying a black girl in the days before the Civil War."[17]

The Bancrofts had three children who survived infancy: Hugh, Guy, and Catherine. Hugh became a highly successful lawyer who also rose to be a major general in the state militia, served for a time as District Attorney for Middlesex County, and chair of the Port of Boston, in which position he was the highest-paid public official in New England. He married twice, first to Mary Cogan, who died after giving birth to their first child, Mary – the granddaughter quoted above – and he made an advantageous second married to Jane Waldron Barron, the stepdaughter and heiress of Clarence W. Barron, founder of the *Wall Street Journal* and owner of the Dow Jones Company. Hugh Bancroft became president of both, as well as of the Boston News Bureau and the Cohasset National Bank. His publishing company also owned *Barron's Weekly* and the *Philadelphia Financial Journal*. Hugh's younger brother Guy became involved with these businesses as well. Their younger sister, Catherine, was married to William David Haviland of Limoges, France, an heir to his family's extensive porcelain manufacturing business, Haviland & Co.[18]

After he became president of the Boston Elevated Railway, Gen. Bancroft began to think about creating a vacation home in his hometown. Bancroft made his first purchase in November 1900 – 65 acres, running from Lowell Road on the south to Martins Pond Road on the north, along Shattuck Street, forming the eastern end of the estate.[19] The *Boston Globe* reported that the

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of Leading Citizens of Middlesex County, Massachusetts (Boston: Biographical Review Publishing Co., 1898), 9, https://archive.org/details/biographicalrevi1898biog2; "Boston Elevated Railway," February 1901, clipping in collection of Groton History Center, Groton, MA.

[16] *Who Was Who*, 53.

[17] Joshua L. Chamberlain et al., eds., *Universities and Their Sons* (Boston: R. Herndon Co., 1900), 4: 203-204, https://archive.org/details/gtu_32400003191149_4; "William Amos Bancroft (1855-1922)," Family Search, https://www.familysearch.org/en/tree/person/details/K8V4-YD9; Mary Bancroft, *Autobiography of a Spy* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1983), 9-10, https://archive.org/details/autobiographyofs00banc.

[18] *Who Was Who*, 53; Samuel Atkins Eliot, *A History of Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1630-1913* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge Tribune, 1913), 164-165, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=loc.ark:/13960/t2794c916&seq=174&q1=Bancroft; "Clipping," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), March 25, 1911, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=bancroft&i=f&d=01011907-12311912&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19110325_english_4&df=211&dt=220&cid=3140; "Appointed," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), December 16, 1911, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=bancroft&i=f&d=01011907-12311912&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19111216_english_4&df=21&dt=30&cid=3140; "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), May 27, 1905, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=bancroft&i=f&d=01011904-12311906&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19050527_english_4&df=11&dt=20&cid=3140; "Young Bride with Spouse," *Boston Globe*, May 27, 1907, https://bostonglobe.newspapers.com/article/the-boston-globe/141417480/; "Boston Woman's Work of Mercy," *Boston Globe*, May 14, 1916; "Noted Home Wedding," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), January 19, 1907, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=clarence%20barron&i=f&d=01011890-12311909&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19070119_english_4&df=1&dt=7&cid=3140; Bancroft, *Autobiography of a Spy*, 13-15, 24-29, 62; Lloyd Wendt, *The Wall Street Journal: The Story of Dow Jones & the Nation's Business Newspaper* (Chicago: Rand, McNally & Co., 1982), 98-99, 121, 138-139, 143, 178-181, 187-189, 191, 211-214, 299; "Death Claims Hugh Bancroft," *Boston Globe*, October 18, 1933, https://bostonglobe.newspapers.com/article/the-boston-globe-hugh-bancroft-obituary/185766115/.

[19] Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, Cambridge, MA: Benedict to Bancroft, November 2, 1900, bk. 2854 pg. 315. This parcel was part of a farm that went with a house on the site of Lawrence Academy's tennis courts (west corner of Lowell Road and Lovers Lane), sometimes called the Mountain Farm, then owned by Percy J. Benedict. The main part of the house is no longer extant, but the ell was moved to 35 Lowell Road, see Virginia A. May, *Groton Houses* (Groton, MA: Groton Historical Society, 1978), 34-35, 84.

Continuation sheet 5

sale, which was brokered through Chapin's farm agency, "is one of the most important sales of real estate that have taken place in Groton in many years. ... A better feeling in real estate and business interests is already perceptible in this popular residential town."[20]

Early in the following year, 1901, Bancroft made seven additional purchases, notably including the site of the house where he was born opposite Town Hall on Main Street (bought from the family of George S. Boutwell, GRO.4), and a large farm that comprised much of Gibbet Hill, centered on the farmhouse at 55 Lowell Road (GRO.156). The estate also included a house on Martins Pond Road (no longer extant) bought from John Moyle, "and numerous barns and outbuildings." Bancroft made two more purchases – at the end of 1901 and in 1904 – of about 10 acres of land near Martins Pond Road, the first purchase including two barns. With that, the estate totaled about 270 acres. It bounded Lowell Road on the south, the entire length of Shattuck Street on the east, Martins Pond Road on the north, and "the orchards and homestead lots on the eastern side of Hollis and Main streets" on the west. It included all of Gibbet Hill, except the town water reservoir on the eastern peak of the hill (then called Reservoir Hill) as well as the majority of Half Moon Meadow between the base of the hill and Main St. The *Boston Post* shared the rumors of what Bancroft would build. In addition to "one of the finest summer houses in New England" on the crest of the western peak of Gibbet Hill (which the *Post* called Harmony Hill – the only known use of that name), "It is understood that a golf course will be laid out" near the reservoir, and Half Moon Meadow "will be flooded and an artificial lake made. The driveway will circle the lake."[21] A couple months later the rumors had expanded to claim that Bancroft was planning to build a trolley line to Groton for easier access to the estate. Few of these plans were carried out, but Bancroft hired Cambridge artist George A. Frost to paint several views of the property.[22]

Bancroft named the estate Shawfieldmont, which newspapers reported meant "grove field hill," reflecting the topography, although "Shaw" was also a reference to the birth name of Bancroft's wife.[23] One of Bancroft's first projects was remodeling the

[20] "Chapin's farm agency," *Boston Globe*, December 17, 1900.

[21] "Groton," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), March 16, 1901, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=benedict&i=f&d=01011882-12311906&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19010316_english_4&df=91&dt=100&cid=3140; "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), February 23, 1901, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=bancroft&i=f&d=01011900-12311903&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19010223_english_4&df=61&dt=70&cid=3140; "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), September 14, 1901, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=bancroft&i=f&d=01011900-12311903&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19010914_english_4&df=91&dt=100&cid=3140; "Groton Residents Elated," *Boston Globe*, April 1, 1901, https://bostonglobe.newspapers.com/article/the-boston-globe-gen-bancrofts-estate/184830160/; "Country Home of Gen. Bancroft," *Boston Post*, March 31, 1901; Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, Cambridge, MA: Boutwell et al. to Bancroft, January 5, 1901, bk. 2868 pg. 19; Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, Cambridge, MA: Boutwell et al. to Bancroft, January 9, 1901, bk. 2868 pg. 17; Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, Cambridge, MA: Shumway to Bancroft, February 16, 1901, bk. 2879 pg. 129; Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, Cambridge, MA: Needham to Bancroft, March 2, 1901, bk. 2878 pg. 524; Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, Cambridge, MA: Hill et ux. to Bancroft, March 4, 1901, bk. 2878 pg. 236; Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, Cambridge, MA: Gerrish to Bancroft, March 7, 1901, bk. 2878 pg. 523; Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, Cambridge, MA: Moyle to Bancroft, March 9, 1901, bk. 2880 pg. 210; Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, Cambridge, MA: Boutwell et al. to Bancroft, September 12, 1901, bk. 2919 pg. 546; Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, Cambridge, MA: Patch to Bancroft, June 22, 1904, bk. 3105 pg. 72. Aside from the Boutwell family, Bancroft also bought land from Ellen Needham, the widow of Col. Daniel Needham (see GRO.138). The land he bought from Emma Shumway and Everett B. Gerrish was part of the lots around 164 Main St. (GRO.5) and 134 Main St. (GRO.10), respectively. The Moyle house was a 1.5-story Victorian cottage, located behind the still extant stone gate posts (built for Bancroft) at 162 Martins Pond Road. The house was taken down circa 2021 to make way for the modern development.

[22] "General Bancroft May Travel Home to Groton in his Own Trolley Car," *Boston Post*, June 23, 1901. One of the paintings by Frost is now in the collection of Lawrence Academy.

[23] "Groton," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), March 16, 1901, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=benedict&i=f&d=01011882-12311906&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19010316_english_4&df=91&dt=100&cid=3140; "Shawfieldmont," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), May 2, 1903, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=shawfieldmont&i=f&d=01011900-12311919&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19030502_english_4&df=1&dt=10&cid=3140; "Hon.

Continuation sheet 6

house at 55 Lowell Road for use of the farm foreman and as a temporary residence for his family.[24] Next came a new barn near the farmhouse, and an entrance drive from Lowell Road with stone gateposts (still extent), which were erected in 1902.[25] The primary building material used by Bancroft throughout the estate was fieldstone. Found when plowing fields, the material was historically used for building stone walls; although some of the fieldstone Bancroft wanted was found on the estate, the quantity of choice stones needed meant that many had to come from elsewhere. Bancroft hired two local teamsters, Willard Tolles and Race Palmer, to go to local farmers, acquire the stones, and bring them to the site.[26]

Work continued in 1903. In April, construction began on the stone wall and gates to mark the main entrance to the estate, on Main Street opposite Town Hall (GRO.911). At the end of May, the local paper reported, "The wall is massive, made of selected field cobbles, with heavy granite capping. ... The granite capping is furnished by H. E. Fletcher & Co. of Westford. The wall was designed by F. F. Low of Boston, and is being built by our fellow-townsman, Charles H. Dodge [see GRO.382], the well-known Boston contractor." Frederic F. Low, the architect, was also the staff architect for the Boston Elevated Railway. The *Boston Globe* added that the wall enclosed "handsome iron gates, and in a recess is a bronze tablet," which is a memorial to Gen. Bancroft's parents. Just after this project was completed, in June, work began for a gatehouse behind the stone walls (GRO.356); it was finished in 1904. Behind the gatehouse, a stone bridge was built over James Brook (extant) and a drive was laid out to the crest of the hill, where Bancroft was gathering building material for future projects.[27]

William A. Bancroft, Farmer," *Boston Globe*, September 14, 1902, https://bostonglobe.newspapers.com/article/the-boston-globe-gen-william-a-bancrof/184830356/.

[24] "Groton," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), May 25, 1901, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=bancroft&i=f&d=01011900-12311903&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19010525_english_4&df=161&dt=170&cid=3140; "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), May 4, 1901, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=shawfieldmont&i=f&d=01011900--12311919&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19010504_english_4&df=11&dt=20&cid=3140.

[25] "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), November 8, 1902, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=bancroft&i=f&d=01011900-12311903&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19021108_english_4&df=31&dt=40&cid=3140.

[26] Barbara Murray, Deborah E. Johnson, and Jayme Kulesz, ed., *Groton at 350: The History of a Massachusetts Town, 1655-2005* (Groton, MA: 2005), 130; "Shawfieldmont," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), May 30, 1903, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=bancroft&i=f&d=01011900-12311903&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19030530_english_4&df=51&dt=60&cid=3140; "Gen William A. Bancroft," *Boston Globe*, July 10, 1903, https://bostonglobe.newspapers.com/article/the-boston-globe/67237428/.

[27] "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), April 25, 1903, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=shawfieldmont&i=f&d=01011900-12311919&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19030425_english_4&df=1&dt=10&cid=3140; "Shawfieldmont," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), May 30, 1903, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=bancroft&i=f&d=01011900-12311903&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19030530_english_4&df=51&dt=60&cid=3140; "Gen William A. Bancroft," *Boston Globe*, July 10, 1903, https://bostonglobe.newspapers.com/article/the-boston-globe/67237428/; "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), June 13, 1903, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=bancroft&i=f&d=01011900-12311903&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19030613_english_4&df=51&dt=60&cid=3140; "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), July 9, 1904, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=shawfieldmont&i=f&d=01011900-12311919&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19040709_english_4&df=1&dt=10&cid=3140; Georgianna Boutwell, "Historian's Report, 1904," January 28, 1905, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=bancroft&i=f&d=01011904-12311906&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19050128_english_8&df=1&dt=10&cid=3140. For Low, see *Boston Architectural Club Year Book 1909* (Boston: Boston Architectural Club, 1909), junior members, rear cover, https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Year_Book_of_the_Boston_Architectura/9Y5AAQAAMAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&bsq=low; *1915-16 Year Book of the American Electric Railway Association* (New York: American Electric Railway Association, 1916), 230, https://www.google.com/books/edition/Year_Book_of_the_American_Electric_Railw/syIXAQAAIAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=f+f+low+architect+boston&pg=PA230&printsec=frontcover.

Bancroft had grand plans for the hilltop. In 1906, he had Lawrence Park – an architect and Groton resident who was also his first cousin once removed (see GRO.19) – draw up plans for the mansion. Park's drawing set, now in the collection of the Groton History Center, shows a sprawling Tudor Revival Style manor that would have contained approximately 40,000 square feet of living space. The first floor would have featured a grand double staircase, a suite of three drawing rooms overlooking the western view, a music room, a dining room, a servants' wing, and a two story 52-by-30-foot library. Upstairs, 14 bedrooms and 8 bathrooms were planned. These plans were never executed.[28] At the same time that Bancroft was considering the buildings he wanted to erect on the estate, he was also thinking about landscaping. In the spring of 1906, he had nearly 900 trees and shrubs planted on the property, including 425 fruit trees; some are alive today.[29] He followed that up in 1907 by planting hawthorns all along the Lowell Road border of Shawfieldmont.[30]

Gen. Bancroft had already begun work on what is now known as the castle. He intended to have a large carriage house and stables complex near the mansion designed in a complimentary style, and in 1903, he had hired a local, John Moyle, to begin working on it, although not much was done. In 1906, Bancroft decided to complete the structure, still with the intention that it would eventually become the stables and carriage house, but until the mansion could be built, it would function as living space for Bancroft's family. He also planned a cottage for farmhands nearby, later finished into the house at 145 Lowell Road. As the castle took shape, it began to be referred to as Bancroft's Bungalow. In October 1906, the local paper reported, "Maj.-Gen. Bancroft is building a bungalow on the southern slope of Gibbet Hill, near the summit, from designs by Messrs. Ripley & Russell, and F. F. Low, associate architects. The contractor is Anthony Varnerin and the foreman in charge is John Bowers." In the same issue, another note related that "A number of Italians who are working for Gen. Bancroft are living in the Fitzgerald house, West-st." According to oral history, many of these skilled Italian stonemasons had been employed by the Boston Elevated Railway in constructing stone bridges, and they carried out most of the stonework at Shawfieldmont.[31] It was later written that the castle cost about $40,000 to build.[32]

Bancroft apparently found the designs of Ripley & Russell to his liking, as he had them draw up another set of plans for the mansion in 1907. Exhibited by the Pittsburgh Architectural Club, these plans, which include a watercolor elevation, were widely published in architectural magazines at the time. The floor plan shows a mansion that would have measured just under 20,000 square feet of living space. These plans, like the first set, were never executed.[33]

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[28] Groton History Center Collection, Groton, MA; "Lawrence Park (1873-1924)," Family Search, https://www.familysearch.org/en/tree/person/details/LRD5-4Y1; *Groton: Images of America* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2009), 122-123.

[29] "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), May 5, 1906, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=bancroft&i=f&d=01011904-12311906&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19060505_english_4&df=11&dt=20&cid=3140.

[30] "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), June 1, 1907, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=gibbet&i=f&d=01011869-12311949&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19070601_english_4&df=31&dt=40&cid=3140.

[31] Murray, Johnson, and Kulesz, *Groton at 350*, 130-131; "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), October 20, 1906, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=bancroft&i=f&d=01011904-12311906&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19061020_english_4&df=21&dt=30&cid=3140; "Groton," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), December 5, 1903, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=sears&i=f&d=01011893-12311907&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19031205_english_4&df=141&dt=150&cid=3140. The construction of the castle has been pieced together from oral history, recorded in *Groton at 350*, and contemporary newspaper reports. Oral history suggests that construction on the castle began around the same time that the gates and gatehouse were built on Main Street. Newspapers reports do not definitely confirm this, but one reference from the end of 1903 mentions Bancroft's "new stable." There is no other stable known to have been constructed on the estate in 1903, so this likely refers to the beginning of construction on the castle.

[32] "Groton Show Place Burned to Ground," *Lowell Courier-Citizen* (Lowell, MA), July 5, 1930.

[33] Pittsburgh Architectural Club, *Exehibition Catalog* (1907), 56, https://www.google.com/books/edition/Exhibition/D2rOAAAAMAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&bsq=ripley+russell+bancroft+groton&dq=ripley+russell+bancroft+groton&printsec=frontcover; *Cyclopedia of Architecture, Carpentry, and Building* (Chicago: American Technical Society, 1915), plates 1 and 2, https://www.google.com/books/edition/Superintendence_contracts_specifications/DUSg95BeWWwC?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=ripley+russell+ba

Continuation sheet 8

Gen. Bancroft was known for his busy schedule, so it is no surprise that he visited Shawfieldmont sporadically. In the first few years he owned the estate, he regularly hosted entertainments. First, it was primarily family gatherings. In February 1902, the local paper reported that Bancroft and his wife Mary had brought their three children – Hugh, Guy, and Catherine – along with Hugh's fiancée, Mary Cogan, to visit Shawfieldmont. In August of the next year, it was reported that "Major-Gen. Bancroft's family and relatives have been having a veritable 'Old home week' at Shawfieldmont," as the family of Bancroft's only sibling, Frederick, had joined them.[34]

In the summer of 1903, Bancroft also put the estate to use for entertaining his associates. He arranged parties of around 40 friends each, including one consisting of managers of the Elevated Railway, and paid for them to take the train to Ayer, then be taken by horse-drawn barges to the old Groton Inn (GRO.11) to eat, before taking a drive around the estate, and finishing the day with a meal in the farmhouse (GRO.156) and pictures of the group. The local paper proclaimed these events "might be called Bancroft days," and the *Boston Globe* commented that Bancroft was "rapidly adding to his already widespread reputation in other lines that of host." In the same period, Bancroft composed two poems – one about the town, and the other about the view from his estate, titled "From the Hills of Shawfieldmont." The *Boston Daily Advertiser* chuckled, "Gen. Bancroft has, it seems, been hiding his poetic light 'under a bushel.'"[35]

Trains and horse-drawn conveyances were soon replaced by automobiles to reach the estate; as early as 1904, Gen. Bancroft's son Hugh drove up from Cambridge in his car with a friend.[36] The family began to fall into a routine by 1905. Mrs. Bancroft, with granddaughter Mary, would come to Groton at the end of June to spend the summer, staying at the bungalow once it was complete. Bancroft himself would spend weekends at the estate during the summer, as well as making midweek visits on Wednesdays.[37]

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ncroft+groton&pg=PA5&printsec=frontcover. See also "Ripley & Russell, Architects," Philadelphia Architects and Buildings, https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display_projects.cfm/106902.

[34] "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), February 15, 1902, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=shawfieldmont&i=f&d=01011900-12311919&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19020215_english_2&df=1&dt=10&cid=3140; "Shawfieldmont," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), August 1, 1903, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=bancroft&i=f&d=01011900-12311903&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19030801_english_4&df=1&dt=10&cid=3140.

[35] "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), August 29, 1903, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=bickford&i=f&d=01011890-12311909&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19030829_english_4&df=1&dt=10&cid=3140; "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), September 5, 1903, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=shawfieldmont&i=f&d=01011900-12311919&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19030905_english_4&df=1&dt=10&cid=3140; "Gen. Bancroft's Guest," *Boston Globe*, August 29, 1903.

[36] "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), April 23, 1904, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=bancroft&i=f&d=01011904-12311906&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19040423_english_4&df=31&dt=40&cid=3140.

[37] "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), June 24, 1905, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=bancroft&i=f&d=01011904-12311906&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19050624_english_4&df=11&dt=20&cid=3140; "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), July 10, 1909, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=bancroft&i=f&d=01011907-12311912&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19090710_english_4&df=21&dt=30&cid=3140; "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), July 1, 1911, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=shawfieldmont&i=f&d=01011900-12311919&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19110701_english_4&df=11&dt=20&cid=3140; "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), October 14, 1911, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=bancroft&i=f&d=01011907-12311912&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19111014_english_4&df=231&dt=240&cid=3140; "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), June 17, 1911, https://ayer.advantage-

Despite his busy schedule, Gen. Bancroft took part in key local events. He was the keynote speaker at the celebration of the 250th anniversary of Groton's founding in 1905 – even if his topic didn't appeal to everyone; the *Boston Globe* proclaimed, "Gen. Bancroft Defends Wealth: Menace of Socialism his Theme at Groton's Quarter Millennial Feast."[38] The same year, Bancroft helped organize the funeral of his long-time friend and neighbor, George S. Boutwell (GRO.4). Three years later, when the Boutwell family had not found the money to erect a memorial in the cemetery, Bancroft contributed to the effort – the papers noted that Bancroft was the only donor who was not part of the anti-imperialist movement which Boutwell had led.[39]

Farming was kept up on the estate by a number of employees. In 1906, the local paper reported "the hay and corn crop is unusually heavy this year. The Indian corn, especially on the hills, of which there are twenty-five to thirty acres, is worth seeing." Dairy products became the farm's focus, which were mainly shipped to Boston for sale. In 1909, the operation received a commendation from the Massachusetts Board of Health for its high standards.[40]

Building on the estate also continued, in part to support the farm operations. In 1909, Bancroft added an additional set of stone gate posts at the Martins Pond Road entrance to the property.[41] Between May 1911 and February 1912, another "cow barn" was built by John Moyle near the other farm buildings at Shawfieldmont. When finished, the farm superintendent Henry Fitzgerald bought "eight new Holstein cows" to fill it, bringing the herd to 65. At the time, the milk was sent to the Boston City Hospital.[42]

1912 was an inflection point for Bancroft and Shawfieldmont. In April, the local paper announced that ground had been broken on the crest of the hill for construction of the long-awaited mansion.[43] In May, preparations were made to open the bungalow, as usual, but after the strike broke out on the Elevated in June, the Bancrofts did not come to Groton, with the exception of one day in June when Mrs. Bancroft visited with her granddaughter. In August it was confirmed that the family would not occupy the bungalow that summer.[44]

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preservation.com/viewer/?k=bancroft&i=f&d=01011907-12311912&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19110617_english_4&df=221&dt=230&cid=3140.

[38] "Gen. Bancroft Defends Wealth," *Boston Globe*, July 13, 1905, https://bostonglobe.newspapers.com/article/the-boston-globe-gen-bancrofts-speech/184830718/.

[39] Samuel A. Green, *Facts Relating to the History of Groton, Massachusetts* (Cambridge, MA: John Wilson and Son, 1914), 2: 116; "Tablet Dedicated," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), May 23, 1908, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=bancroft&i=f&d=01011907-12311912&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19080523_english_4&df=11&dt=20&cid=3140.

[40] "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), August 4, 1906, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=bancroft&i=f&d=01011904-12311906&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19060804_english_4&df=1&dt=10&cid=3140; "The Milk War," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), May 7, 1910, https://www.shirleylibrary.org/images/pdf/TurnersPublicSpirit.vol.42.no.34.pdf; "Gen. Bancroft's Dairy Praised by State Board," *Boston Post*, April 28, 1909.

[41] "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), October 16, 1909, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=shawfieldmont&i=f&d=01011900-12311919&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19091016_english_4&df=11&dt=20&cid=3140.

[42] "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), May 13, 1911, https://www.shirleylibrary.org/images/pdf/TurnersPublicSpirit.vol.43.no.35.pdf; "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), July 22, 1911, https://www.shirleylibrary.org/images/pdf/TurnersPublicSpirit.vol.43.no.45.pdf; "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), February 17, 1912, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=shawfieldmont&i=f&d=01011900-12311919&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19120217_english_4&df=11&dt=20&cid=3140.

[43] "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), April 13, 1912, https://www.shirleylibrary.org/images/pdf/TurnersPublicSpirit.vol.44.no.31.pdf.

[44] "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), May 25, 1912, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=shawfieldmont&i=f&d=01011900-12311919&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19120525_english_4&df=11&dt=20&cid=3140; "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), June 29, 1912, https://www.shirleylibrary.org/images/pdf/TurnersPublicSpirit.vol.44.no.42.pdf; "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), August 17, 1912, https://www.shirleylibrary.org/images/pdf/TurnersPublicSpirit.vol.44.no.49.pdf.

Continuation sheet 10

The surprise came in mid-September, when Bancroft laid off most of the workforce at Shawfieldmont, and advertised both it and his Cambridge home for sale. Several potential buyers looked at the estate, but only two weeks later, he told locals that he had decided against selling Shawfieldmont.[45] At the same time, he was granted a 6-week leave of absence from his duties as president of the Elevated due to his health. The *Boston Post* reported, "The announcement that General Bancroft had broken down from overwork came as a surprise, as during the recent strike of the Elevated employees he seemed as vigorous as ever. It is said, however, that the strain of his duties has preyed upon him to such an extent that he found it necessary to take a vacation."[46]

Gen. Bancroft set sail for France to visit his daughter, Catherine, and almost immediately thereafter, at the beginning of October, a report circled that the estate had been sold to Everett E. Tarbell or Kemp & Bennett, both of Pepperell. The rumor mill went wild for the next month while Bancroft was away. It was shortly announced that an auction of the livestock on the estate would take place on October 16 and 17, and the local paper commented, "Widespread feelings of regret are expressed here that Maj.-Gen. Bancroft should conclude to sell his large estate of wide acres, which he has made productive and attractive. He has expended large sums of money upon it and given employment to a large force of men." On October 15, Bancroft's son, Guy, confirmed to the *Boston Globe* that "the sale is as good as made" to Everett E. Tarbell. When asked why his father was selling, Guy stated, "Father has spent about $200,000 on the place and thought a great deal of the property, but finds that it carries with it a great care which he does not feel he should labor under, in connection with his fast growing responsibilities." Guy took pains to deny rumors that Gen. Bancroft was to step down as president of the Elevated, rumors that had to be denied again the next day by a member of the company's executive committee who was a top candidate for a replacement.[47]

The statement from Guy Bancroft was all the family said about the sale. One publication, the *Boston Journal*, offered the commentary that "The news that the general had sold his country home came as a surprise to many of his friends who have known the pleasure he has taken in seeing 'the farm,' as he called it, grow into one of the finest estates in northern Massachusetts. ... A beautiful bungalow has been built which, it was understood, was later to be turned into a stable when the 'big house' had been completed. Stones and material for this new home had already been assembled and it was thought that the general was soon to begin the erection of a model country house." Ultimately, the sale was concluded when Gen. Bancroft returned home at the beginning of November. Kemp & Bennett were the successful purchasers, rather than Everett E. Tarbell.[48]

So why did Bancroft sell? That is one of the mysteries of Groton history. His health had clearly been affected by the strike, but beyond that, the only explanation (aside from what his son Guy said) is that none of Bancroft's three children were interested in taking on the estate and the work it entailed. It is important to note that there is no evidence that Bancroft ran out of money.[49]

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[45] "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), September 14, 1912, https://www.shirleylibrary.org/images/pdf/TurnersPublicSpirit.vol.45.no.01.pdf; "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), September 28, 1912, https://www.shirleylibrary.org/images/pdf/TurnersPublicSpirit.vol.45.no.03.pdf.

[46] "Bancroft on Leave of Absence," *Boston Post*, September 27, 1912.

[47] "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), October 5, 1912, https://www.shirleylibrary.org/images/pdf/TurnersPublicSpirit.vol.45.no.04.pdf; "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), October 12, 1912, https://www.shirleylibrary.org/images/pdf/TurnersPublicSpirit.vol.45.no.05.pdf; "Bancroft Farm Sold," *Boston Globe*, October 15, 1912, https://bostonglobe.newspapers.com/article/the-boston-globe-shawfieldmont-sold/184833221/; "Richards Denies Report," *Boston Globe*, October 16, 1912, https://bostonglobe.newspapers.com/article/the-boston-globe-sale-of-bancrofts-esta/184831247/; "Clipping," "News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), October 19, 1912, https://www.shirleylibrary.org/images/pdf/TurnersPublicSpirit.vol.45.no.06.pdf.

[48] "Clipping," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), October 19, 1912, https://www.shirleylibrary.org/images/pdf/TurnersPublicSpirit.vol.45.no.06.pdf; "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), November 9, 1912, https://www.shirleylibrary.org/images/pdf/TurnersPublicSpirit.vol.45.no.09.pdf; Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, Cambridge, MA: Bancroft to Kemp et al., November 7, 1912, bk. 3740 pg. 183.

[49] The idea that Bancroft ran out of money is one of the most commonly spread stories about the castle. One theory posits that he lost a great deal of money when the Elevated stock crashed following the strike. While it is true that the Elevated stock lost significant value during this period, Bancroft himself did not have much money in the stock. In 1918, he was reported as owning 320 shares, which at par of $100, would have been worth $32,000, less than his salary. He owned the same amount in the prior two years, and there is no indication that he owned more earlier; in fact, when the railway was in the process of forming in 1897, he plainly stated that he was "not a capitalist," in other words, a

Continuation sheet 11

The new owners of Shawfieldmont, William A. Kemp and Frank R. Bennett, were partners in a real estate business; they purchased the property as an investment and began to look at subdividing it. They rented out the castle for the summer of 1913, and the local paper reported, "An auto truck of goods passed through Main street this Friday morning bound for the former Bancroft bungalow on Gibbet hill for a party who will occupy during the summer." In 1914, Kemp & Bennett found a buyer for the castle and 35 acres around it, extending south to Lowell Road. The deal was finalized in July. A month earlier, the paper noted "It is reported quite freely about town that the former Bancroft bungalow on Gibbet hill has been sold by Kemp & Bennett, of Pepperell, for a private hospital."[50]

It was Dr. Harold W. Ayres who had purchased the property and would open the hospital. Harold Winslow Ayres (1881-1966) was born in Somerville, the only child of John Winslow and Sarah Maria (Moulton) Ayres. The Ayres family was an old and well-off clan from North Brookfield, MA. Harold's father moved to Boston in the 1870s, following his marriage in 1871, and worked as a journalist. Harold was educated at the Boston Latin School and Harvard, graduating from Harvard Medical School in 1903. He subsequently interned at the Waltham Hospital and began his practice in West Somerville. Harold was married in 1907 to Annette Catherine Rogers, who was born in Nebraska; the marriage first took place on April 8 at the house of a justice of the peace in Sand Hill, NC, before a more formal ceremony with a clergyman took place on June 8 in Quincy. The marriage did not stick, and by 1910 they were separated. After a divorce, Harold was remarried in 1913 in Chatham to Pauline Vaughn Scates (1889-1972), the daughter of Joseph H. and Prudence (Burrill) Scates and a native of Georgetown, MA. She was a registered nurse. The Ayres did not have any children. Dr. Ayres' parents lived with him in Groton at the end of their lives.[51]

Despite his background, Dr. Ayres did not have the funds to create a large private hospital on his own. First, he took out a $11,000 mortgage to purchase the property, then created a corporation, the Groton Private Hospital, Inc., with $30,000 in capital, to take over the operation and insulate him from personal liability. Ayres managed to get many prominent investors in the venture, including Massachusetts Adjutant General Charles H. Cole, Surgeon General Frank P. Williams of the Massachusetts

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major investor, in the company. See "List of Stockholders of Boston Elevated," *Boston Globe*, May 3, 1918; "L Men Pleased," *Boston Globe*, December 18, 1897.

Another theory holds that Bancroft lost money in copper mines, taken from a book written by his granddaughter Mary Bancroft, *Upside Down in the Magnolia Tree*, which is a highly problematic source. Mary Bancroft makes clear in the introductory note that the book is a free combination of a romanticized version of her childhood and pure fiction. While there are many claims in the book that can be verified as reasonably accurate, there are at least as many that can be proved false. For most, however, no independent evidence exists. The claim that Gen. Bancroft lost money in copper falls into the latter category. But even in this book, it is clearly stated that the underlying reason Bancroft sold the estate was that his children were not interested in it, see Mary Bancroft, *Upside Down in the Magnolia Tree* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1952) 181-182, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.$b86285&seq=9. The copper theory is conspicuous by its absence in the same author's nonfiction *Autobiography of a Spy*, which deals freely with other sensitive topics like her father's suicide. In fact, there is no mention of the family having a shortage of funds at any point during this period in the autobiography. The leading proponent of the copper theory is Cherie Dumont in her 2023 book, *The Castle on Gibbet Hill*. That work takes a sensationalist tack to the history of Gibbet Hill, introducing inaccuracies such as this.

[50] "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), June 21, 1913, https://www.shirleylibrary.org/images/pdf/TurnersPublicSpirit.vol.45.no.41.pdf; "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), June 13, 1914, https://www.shirleylibrary.org/images/pdf/TurnersPublicSpirit.vol.46.no.40.pdf; Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, Cambridge, MA: Kemp et al. to Ayres, July 7, 1914, bk. 3897 pg. 180.

[51] "Dr. Ayres Dies in Groton," *The Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), June 2, 1966, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=ayres&i=f&by=1966&bdd=1960&d=01011966-12311966&m=between&ord=k1&fn=the_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19660602_english_3&df=1&dt=7&cid=3140; "Dr. Harold Winslow Ayres (1881-1966)," Find a Grave, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/183601102/harold-winslow-ayres; "Mrs. Pauline Ayres, 58 Years in Groton," *The Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), July 20, 1972, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=ayres&i=f&by=1972&bdd=1970&d=01011972-12311972&m=between&ord=k1&fn=the_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19720720_english_15&df=1&dt=3&cid=3140; "Testimonial for Dr. Ayres at No. Mid. Regional School October 18," *The Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), October 12, 1961, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=ayres&i=f&d=01011960-12311969&m=between&ord=k1&fn=the_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19611012_english_1&df=1&dt=10&cid=3140; "Harold Winslow Ayres (1881-1966)," Family Search, https://www.familysearch.org/en/tree/person/details/9J8N-JZV; "Groton," *Lowell Courier-Citizen* (Lowell, MA), September 30, 1927.

National Guard, State Senator Charles Eldredge, the mayor of Somerville, and Groton's town treasurer, Grant Shattuck (see GRO.381). An interesting connection with the castle's prior chapter came in the form of another investor, the Boston financier Galen L. Stone, who had served as a director of the Boston Elevated Railway with Gen. Bancroft.[52]

At first, the hospital operated entirely out of the castle, which, it was reported, "has 24 rooms, including a large living-room with a massive field-stone fireplace. There are no wards, but there are private rooms for 12 patients. ... A billiard table is a feature." With steam heat, the building had all the modern conveniences necessary for a long-term recovery hospital, or "home hospital," as it was called at the time. Dr. Ayres had selected the site because of the beautiful scenery and fresh air. Shortly before the opening, in July 1914, he told the local paper that "While patients suffering from different ailments will be taken and some surgical operations performed, no infectious cases are to be received." Ayres wanted the patients to socialize with each other. After the hospital's first year, during which it had cared for some 100 patients, in August 1915, the *Boston Globe* reported, "Because of its distinct individuality, and because in the opinion of many physicians it marks a type of institution that will be more and more adopted, the Groton Private Hospital, of which Dr. Harold W. Ayres is the founder and superintendent, has aroused much interest among the medical profession." The paper went on to opine that if sufficient funds could be obtained, the hospital would have a brilliant future. At the same time, "it has been rather a hard struggle for Dr. Ayres and his wife."[53]

Over the course of the first year, Dr. Ayres published an advertising pamphlet with images of the castle, and expanded the castle with a sunroom off the south end in the summer of 1915. He also revived agriculture on the property, adding two horses and six cattle, building two small stables near the castle, as well as nurturing "apple, peach, pear, plum, cherry and quince trees on the estate." A bonus was a five-hole golf course, left over from Bancroft's time, that the patients could use. He had plans for expansion and intended to use the large amount of stone building material Bancroft had hauled to the hilltop for future buildings. In 1916, Ayres bought a neighboring parcel from Kemp & Bennett where part of the cottage Bancroft had planned for farmhands existed. Ayres finished and expanded the building at 145 Lowell Road as his home and office.[54]

The hospital, however, could not find enough well-paying patients to support itself. It began to operate as a local community hospital (in competition with another on Main Street), where babies were born and injuries were treated.[55] A group from the town

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[52] "Groton Hospital of Unique Type," *Boston Globe*, August 22, 1915; Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, Cambridge, MA: Ayres to Kemp et al., July 7, 1914, bk. 3897 pg. 182; Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, Cambridge, MA: Ayres to Groton Private Hospital, Inc., July 15, 1914, bk. 3900 pg. 81. Galen L. Stone was first a director of the Boston Elevated Railway in 1913, see *Sixteenth Annual Report of the Directors of the Boston Elevated Railway Co., 1913* (Boston: George H. Ellis Co., 1913), https://archives.lib.state.ma.us/entities/journalfile/3e9e2699-7314-4ae9-b0e8-4982e66cd59c; *The National Corporation Reporter* (July 23, 1914), 874, https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_National_Corporation_Reporter/8ZtDAQAAMAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=groton+private+hospital+ayres&pg=PA874&printsec=frontcover.

[53] "Groton Hospital of Unique Type," *Boston Globe*, August 22, 1915; "A New Enterprise," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), July 11, 1914, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=ayres&i=f&d=01011910-12311919&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19140711_english_4&df=1&dt=10&cid=3140.

[54] "Groton Hospital of Unique Type," *Boston Globe*, August 22, 1915; Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, Cambridge, MA: Kemp et al. to Ayres, April 18, 1916, bk. 4045 pg. 446; Murray, Johnson, and Kulesz, *Groton at 350*, 131; "Clipping," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), August 8, 1931, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=ayres&i=f&d=01011930-12311931&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19310808_english_4&df=1&dt=10&cid=3140. A copy of the advertising pamphlet is in the collection of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

[55] "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), August 11, 1917, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=ayres&i=f&d=01011916-12311920&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19170811_english_4&df=1&dt=10&cid=3140; "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), December 13, 1919, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=ayres&i=f&d=01011916-12311920&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19191213_english_4&df=1&dt=10&cid=3140; "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), May 22, 1920, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=ayres&i=f&d=01011916-12311920&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19200522_english_4&df=1&dt=10&cid=3140.

of Ayer, looking for a hospital facility to treat citizens of that town, considered renting all or part of the hospital in 1917, but ultimately decided against it in favor of keeping facilities in their town (see AYE.127).[56]

The major change came in 1920. At the time, following World War I, the U.S. government was contracting with private hospitals to take care of wounded veterans, as no national system existed. In June 1920, Dr. Ayres secured a contract to take about 40 veterans, mainly suffering from gas blindness and tuberculosis.[57] Before the end of the month, 30 arrived.[58] Dr. Ayres worked with local groups to add more amenities, including a vocational training program that opened in November, and to arrange entertainments, such as parties at Halloween and Christmas. But this remained an experimental model – the government contracting with a private hospital for the care of veterans was a new idea, and Dr. Ayres regularly had to travel to Washington to ensure the contract was renewed, as it only lasted for a month at a time.[59] His brother-in-law, Winthrop Pattee (husband of his wife's sister), helped Dr. Ayres manage the operation before Pattee's early death at age 47 at the end of 1921.[60]

In 1921, the Harding administration took office, and attempts were made to organize the government hospital system, focused on the Veterans Bureau. Soon, Dr. Ayres' hospital was designated as U.S. Contract Hospital No. 1 and asked to support more veterans. But the castle was overcrowded with some 50 men by late 1921. That led to a building campaign – at the crest of the hill, using fieldstones left behind by Bancroft, Dr. Ayres constructed a main hospital building 190 feet long between 1921 and 1922. It was dedicated on April 19 of the latter year. That project had barely been completed when fundraising began to get $5,000 to build a "recreation hut," which would have vocational training facilities on the lower floor and an auditorium and recreation rooms on the upper floor. In the end, a building was moved from Devens for the purpose.[61]

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[56] "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), March 31, 1917, https://www.shirleylibrary.org/images/pdf/TurnersPublicSpirit.vol.49.no.30.pdf.

[57] "Clipping," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), August 8, 1931, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=ayres&i=f&d=01011930-12311931&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19310808_english_4&df=1&dt=10&cid=3140; "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), June 5, 1920, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=ayres&i=f&d=01011916-12311920&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19200605_english_4&df=1&dt=10&cid=3140.

[58] "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), June 19, 1920, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?i=f&by=1920&bdd=1920&bm=6&bd=19&d=06191920-06191920&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19200619_english_4&df=1&dt=8&cid=3140.

[59] "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), November 6, 1920, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=ayres&i=f&d=01011916-12311920&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19201106_english_4&df=1&dt=10&cid=3140; "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), December 25, 1920, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=ayres&i=f&d=01011916-12311920&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19201225_english_4&df=1&dt=10&cid=3140; Henry M. Barry, "Congressman Dale Helping Ex-Service Men," *The Caledonian Record* (St. Johnsbury, VT), March 3, 1922. For the hospital situation in this period, see Rosemary Stevens, *A Time of Scandal: Charles R. Forbes, Warren G. Harding, and the Making of the Veterans Bureau* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2016), X-XI, 36-37, 53-54, 84, https://archive.org/details/timeofscandalcha0000stev.

[60] "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), December 3, 1921, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=ayres&i=f&d=01011921-12311924&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19211203_english_4&df=31&dt=39&cid=3140.

[61] "Hallowe'en Party," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), November 5, 1921, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=ayres&i=f&d=01011921-12311924&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19211105_english_4&df=1&dt=10&cid=3140; "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), November 12, 1921, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=ayres&i=f&d=01011921-12311924&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19211112_english_4&df=31&dt=39&cid=3140; "Groton Soldiers Will be Warm," *Concord Enterprise* (Concord, MA), November 29, 1922; "Dedicate New Hospital Building at Groton," *Concord Enterprise* (Concord, MA), April 26, 1922; "To Build Hut for Veterans in Groton," *Boston Globe*, July 12, 1922; "Recreation Huts for Groton Hospital Vets," *Boston Post*, July 12, 1922; "Clipping," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), August 8, 1931,

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As soon as the main hospital building was completed, in March 1922, the number of patients increased to nearly 100. That made the issue of 30-day contracts more significant. For veterans who were supposed to rest, the constant discussion of whether the hospital would close was not helpful. A group of congressmen pushed for a longer lease – perhaps five years – urging action from the head of the Veterans Bureau, Charles R. Forbes, who was soon to be infamous.[62] But no change was made. By the fall of 1922, the number of patients and employees had reached a peak: 111 and 50, respectively. Still, the government did not provide all that was needed, and locals sprung to fill the gap, making wool clothes to keep the veterans warm over the winter.[63]

The Groton hospital was not alone in not getting resources from the federal government. A massive amount of corruption was chewing through the resources of the Veterans Bureau. President Harding demanded the resignation of Bureau head Forbes over the evidence that came to light. Forbes resigned in February 1923, later being convicted for leading the Veterans Bureau Scandal, one of the most significant of the corruption scandals that riddled the Harding administration. Forbes' replacement immediately began making significant changes to the hospital system.[64]

Dr. Ayres' operation was one of the casualties. Having never secured a long-term contract, it was easy for the Veterans Bureau, in an effort to cut costs, to end the contract, despite the protests of patients and locals. The plans were underway in March 1923, and on May 15, the last 30 veterans were transferred to the new Veterans Bureau hospital in Rutland, MA; in total, over nearly three years, the hospital had cared for almost 400 soldiers. With that, the Groton Private Hospital ceased to be a government contract facility – and lost most of its revenue. The operation soon closed entirely.[65]

Dr. Ayres quickly turned to leasing out some of the extra space. In September 1923, an organization calling itself the Groton Country Club formed with 70 charter members. Groton School (GRO.E.) teacher Clifford S. Griswold (see GRO.502) was elected president, and dentist Edward B. Branigan (see GRO.177) was chosen vice president. The club had already arranged with Dr. Ayres to rent part of the hospital grounds, including the golf course, and "one of the renovated buildings" to be used for a clubhouse and inn, for which they had already applied for a license.[66] This was the town's first country club and publicly accessible golf course. It is unknown which building they rented, but it seems likely that it was the castle.[67]

The club immediately set about expanding and upgrading the course, and in October, they held their first tournament, with a party of some 100 people taking place in the clubhouse the night before. The next year, the Groton Country Club Inn opened, and hosted a gathering of the Worcester North District Medical Society in July.[68] However, the venture did not last long. In 1925,

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https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=ayres&i=f&d=01011930-12311931&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19310808_english_4&df=1&dt=10&cid=3140.

[62] Henry M. Barry, "Congressman Dale Helping Ex-Service Men," *The Caledonian Record* (St. Johnsbury, VT), March 3, 1922.

[63] "Groton Soldiers Will be Warm," *Concord Enterprise* (Concord, MA), November 29, 1922; "Clipping," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), August 8, 1931, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=ayres&i=f&d=01011930-12311931&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19310808_english_4&df=1&dt=10&cid=3140.

[64] See Stevens, *A Time of Scandal*, parts 3 and 4; Samuel Hopkins Adams, *Incredible Era: The Life and Times of Warren Gamaliel Harding*, rev. ed. (New York: Octagon Books, 1979), chapter 21, pg. 424, https://archive.org/details/incredibleeralif0000adam.

[65] "Groton Soldier Patients to be Taken to Rutland," *Concord Enterprise* (Concord, MA), March 28, 1923; "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), May 19, 1923, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?i=f&by=1923&bdd=1920&bm=5&bd=19&d=05191923-05191923&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19230519_english_4&df=1&dt=8&cid=3140; "Clipping," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), August 8, 1931, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=ayres&i=f&d=01011930-12311931&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19310808_english_4&df=1&dt=10&cid=3140.

[66] "Groton News Items," "New Golf Club," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), September 15, 1923, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=ayres&i=f&d=01011921-12311924&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19230915_english_4&df=11&dt=20&cid=3140.

[67] The castle was the only building on the hill that could quickly be converted to a clubhouse and inn, as took place. The main hospital building would've needed additional renovations, and the recreation building didn't have bedrooms. Dr. Ayres' home and office at 145 Lowell Road were on a separate property.

[68] "Groton Country Club," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), October 20, 1923, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=%22groton%20country%20club%22&i=f&d=01011890-12311929&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19231020_english_4&df=1&dt=4&cid=3140; "Groton

one of the members of the club, Dana Sherlaw, the proprietor of the old Groton Inn (GRO.11), had a grand opening for his Groton Inn Golf Course, centered around a house that is no longer extant on Lovers Lane (GRO.159); the Country Club appears to have transferred to that course. The latter course is today's Groton Country Club (a town-owned facility separate from the Country Club organization of the 1920s, which disbanded not long after forming).[69]

By 1925, the Groton Private Hospital, Inc., was bankrupt, and did not pay its real estate taxes of $490 for the year. At the tax sale in February 1927, the buyer was also the mortgage holder, Albert M. Phelps of Ayer, who foreclosed the mortgage (which Dr. Ayres had originally given in 1914) later in the year. The castle and hospital buildings stood vacant for the next couple of years.[70]

According to Groton School chronicler Henry Howe Richards, the castle was rented for two gatherings in the fall of 1929 by the Groton Hunt Club; local historian Helen McCarthy Sawyer supports this statement, suggesting that the club's Thanksgiving ball was held in the castle in 1929. However, no newspaper references from the time confirm this.[71] The Hunt Club was formed in 1922 by wealthy residents of Groton and surrounding towns to pursue the aristocratic English sport of foxhunting (although, since the number of foxes was limited, they usually followed a scent trail). It was founded by Richard Ely Danielson (1885-1957) and his wife Barbara (Deering) Danielson (1888-1982), who lived seasonally at an estate off the end of Joy Lane south of Groton School (site of GRO.485); Mrs. Danielson was an heiress to the Deering family of Chicago, who founded Deering Harvester, one of the companies that merged into International Harvester. Shortly after the Hunt Club was founded, it became the most popular social outlet of the local elite.[72]

However, the castle's days as a complete structure were numbered. Around 4 o'clock on the afternoon of July 4, 1930, a boy rushed to the home of Dr. Ayres next door, telling him the castle was on fire. The fire department was quickly summoned by the alarm, but there was little that could be done. The interior was already consumed by flames, and equipment counted on gravity-fed water pressure from the town's reservoir – which, on the second peak of Gibbet Hill, is at a slightly lower elevation than the top of the castle's tower. A lack of wind allowed the firefighters to keep the blaze contained to the castle, but the structure was a total loss. No cause of the fire was ever formally documented. There had been some youths on the property earlier in the day – by some accounts trespassing – and it was thought that they may have started the fire with careless use of firecrackers as part

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News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), March 8, 1924, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=golf&i=f&by=1924&bdd=1920&d=01011924-12311924&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19240308_english_4&df=1&dt=10&cid=3140; "Ayer News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), July 26, 1924, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=golf&i=f&by=1924&bdd=1920&d=01011924-12311924&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19240726_english_5&df=11&dt=18&cid=3140.

[69] Groton Inn Golf Course ad., *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), April 25, 1925, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=sherlaw&i=f&by=1925&bdd=1920&d=01011925-12311925&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19250425_english_4&df=1&dt=1&cid=3140. The Groton Inn Golf Course was referred to colloquially as the Groton Country Club as early as 1934, see "Littleton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), November 3, 1934, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=%22country%20club%22&i=f&d=01011924-12311939&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19341103_english_8&df=21&dt=30&cid=3140. See also Joshua Vollmar, "Groton Country Club: A Century of Community, Golf, & History," *Groton Herald* (Groton, MA), November 29, 2024.

[70] Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, Cambridge, MA: Groton collector to Phelps, February 28, 1927, bk. 5071 pg. 258; Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, Cambridge, MA: Phelps to Phelps, September 30, 1927, bk. 5150 pg. 467; "Clipping," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), August 8, 1931, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=ayres&i=f&d=01011930-12311931&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19310808_english_4&df=1&dt=10&cid=3140.

[71] Henry Howe Richards, *A Schoolmaster's Scrapbook: Half a Century at Groton* (Self-published, Groton School, 2010), 302-303; *Groton at 350*, 137.

[72] "Nashoba Valley Hunt - A Brief History," Nashoba Valley Hunt Club, www.nashobavalleyhunt.org/index.php?content_id=2; Murray, Johnson, and Kulesz, *Groton at 350*, 136-137; A. Henry Higginson and Julian Ingersoll Chamberlain, *Hunting in the United States and Canada* (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1928), 76-79, https://www.google.com/books/edition/Hunting_in_the_United_States_and_Canada/awQuAQAAIAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&bsq=groton. See also oral history video, "The Groton Hunt Club," Groton History Center, October 20, 2015, https://vimeo.com/143539418; "Richard Ely Danielson (1885-1957)," Find a Grave, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/184044215/richard-ely-danielson.

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of the July Fourth celebration. The day after, papers noted that "Only the massive stone walls remain today of 'Shawfieldmont,' once the palatial summer home of Gen. William A. Bancroft." The loss was estimated at $75,000. Only a fraction was insured.[73]

The next year, the property owner, Albert M. Phelps, decided to unload the place. In June 1931, the sale was completed to Barbara (Deering) Danielson, the International Harvester heiress. At the time, the 35-acre property was described as the former "Bancroft Bungalow," and included "the pile of stone building material near the top of said hill."[74] As it turned out, the Groton Hunt Club's lease on their former clubhouse, the Lawrence Homestead (GRO.89), expired in May 1931, and they had been looking for a new location. Mrs. Danielson bought the land on Gibbet Hill with the intention of leasing the hospital building to the club for their new headquarters.[75] They moved into the renovated building in November 1931.[76]

The Hunt Club used the property until the U.S. joined World War II, when they went on hiatus. Although they would reform after the war, they did not return to Gibbet Hill.[77] Mrs. Danielson, however, did not have to look far to find a buyer for the property. Her daughter, Marion, was assembling farmland in the vicinity, and purchased the 35 acres in 1952.[78] She also acquired most of the former Shawfieldmont estate, and the farm around 245 Lowell Road (GRO.158) on the hill to the east (now called Angus Hill). The sprawling farm was named Gibbet Hill Farm. Shortly after purchasing the castle property, Marion had the former hospital buildings removed, leaving only the castle's ruins at the crest of the hill.[79]

Marion Danielson (1921-1998) was first married in 1949 to Malcolm Strachan (1904-1960), chaplain of the elite Groton School (GRO.E), and after his death was remarried in 1962 to Douglass Campbell (1919-2001), vice president of the New York Central Railroad. Mrs. Campbell, as she is remembered in Groton, lived primarily in New York – at times running the *Atlantic Monthly*, which her family owned – while also residing at times in Boston, Chicago, Florida, and her family's estate in the Joy Lane-Shirley Road area of Groton.[80]

Mrs. Campbell intended Gibbet Hill Farm to become a showcase agricultural operation and hired William "Bill" Conley as farm manager to ensure it reached its potential. Under Conley's leadership, the farm became New England's premier Angus cattle

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[73] "Groton Show Place Burned to Ground," *Lowell Courier-Citizen* (Lowell, MA), July 5, 1930; "Bancroft House Burns in Groton," *Fitchburg Sentinel* (Fitchburg, MA), July 3, 1930; "Groton Estate Destroyed by Fire," *Lowell Sun* (Lowell, MA), July 5, 1930; "Serious Fires on Holiday," *Portsmouth Herald* (Portsmouth, NH), July 5, 1930; "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), July 12, 1930, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?i=f&by=1930&bdd=1930&bm=7&bd=12&d=07121930-07121930&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19300712_english_4&df=1&dt=8&cid=3140; "Clipping," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), August 8, 1931, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=ayres&i=f&d=01011930-12311931&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19310808_english_4&df=1&dt=10&cid=3140.

[74] Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, Cambridge, MA: Phelps to Danielson, June 26, 1931, bk. 5570 pg. 527.

[75] "Clipping," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), August 8, 1931, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=ayres&i=f&d=01011930-12311931&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19310808_english_4&df=1&dt=10&cid=3140.

[76] "Groton News Items," *Turner's Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), November 14, 1931, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=gibbet&i=f&d=01011869-12311949&m=between&ord=k1&fn=turners_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19311114_english_4&df=21&dt=30&cid=3140.

[77] "Nashoba Valley Hunt - A Brief History," Nashoba Valley Hunt Club, www.nashobavalleyhunt.org/index.php?content_id=2; Murray, Johnson, and Kulesz, *Groton at 350*, 136-137. See also oral history video, "The Groton Hunt Club," Groton History Center, October 20, 2015, https://vimeo.com/143539418.

[78] Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, Cambridge, MA: Danielson to Strachan, November 7, 1952, bk. 8002 pg. 237.

[79] For Gibbet Hill Farm, see Oakfield Research, "Groton Farms: Final Report of the Groton Agricultural Survey Project," Groton Historical Commission (2011), 71-75, part 2, 20-31, https://portal.grotonma.gov/storage/Historical_Commission/History/Hist_Comm_Agricultural_Report_2012.pdf; "Gibbet Hill Farm Memories Through LA Eyes," *Times Free Press* (Ayer, MA), September 27, 1995, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=gibbet&i=f&d=01011869-12312024&m=between&ord=k1&fn=times_free_press_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19950927_english_1&df=1&dt=10&cid=3140.

[80] "Marion Danielson (1921-1998)," Family Search, https://www.familysearch.org/en/tree/person/details/LJ18-DQ8; "Paid Notice: Deaths Campbell, Marion Danielson," *New York Times*, November 28, 1998; "N.Y. Central's Campbell Weds Mrs. Strachan," *Boston Globe*, January 14, 1962, https://bostonglobe.newspapers.com/article/the-boston-globe/118432388/.

operation. The renown of the farm was such that Conley lectured on Angus rearing around the world, even in the Soviet Union during the height of the Cold War. The operation remained active up through 1997.[81]

During this period, the castle was used for little, but became an attraction for local youth, who visited both with and without official permission. Conley recalled in 1995 that boys from neighboring Lawrence Academy (GRO.B) "would come up to 'the castle' on Friday and Saturday nights. ... They used to hang flags on the old flag pole. They'd fly all kinds of things." He added that, on Tuesday afternoons, there was "always a steady stream... They used to build little bonfires. Every now and then, we would send cattle up the hill and they would scatter." Despite that, Conley reminisced that it was a "great hangout for the kids." As the castle's renown spread, some locals took issue with the structure being referred to with the term for a medieval fortress. Isabel Beal (see GRO.133), who was known for decades as a local historian, would sarcastically call it the "so-called castle."[82]

The days of Gibbet Hill Farm were numbered at the end of Mrs. Campbell's life. At the time, Groton was experiencing a housing boom, and real estate values were soaring. As such, there was consideration of developing Mrs. Campbell's land on the part of her family's money managers. She was the town's largest landowner at the time, so the value would have been significant. According to Conley, Mrs. Campbell "loved conservation," and was planning to keep most of her land undeveloped and protected. But, as told by Conley, "Then Mrs. C. picked up the paper and read the headline *A Tale of Two Developers* – she was the bad guy," and she swore to develop all the land.[83]

In 1984, Mrs. Campbell had transferred most of her Groton property – including all of Gibbet Hill Farm – to a trust.[84] The trust took the lead on the development, and, as told in *Groton at 350*, "In October 1997, Groton residents were stunned when the Campbell Trust submitted development plans for 174 conventional lots on more than 500 acres of agricultural land at Gibbet Hill, Angus Hill, and Brooks Orchard. The proposal was a wake-up call for Groton as it faced the possible loss of its most familiar natural landmark." The plans included building a road over Gibbet Hill. Mrs. Campbell died the following year, but the project continued.[85]

Even though citizens were outraged, the town had no effective way of fighting the development and plans were approved in 1999. But just when it seemed Gibbet Hill would be a subdivision, Groton residents Steve and Nancy Webber bought the hill and other property from the Campbell Trust with the intention of preserving it; the transaction was finalized in September 2000. Shortly thereafter, the town voted to purchase the development rights to the parcels from the Webbers. This placed a conservation restriction on the land and included an easement for public access to the castle and the crest of Gibbet Hill. The arrangement was finalized in 2002. Soon, a trail was laid out from Lowell Road and some minor safety improvements were made to the castle (such as adding a railing) to prepare for public use. The Webbers opened the popular Gibbet Hill Grill restaurant at the base of the hill in 2004 and have continued to keep Angus cattle on the farm.[86]

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[81] Oakfield Research, "Groton Farms: Final Report of the Groton Agricultural Survey Project," Groton Historical Commission (2011), 71-75, https://portal.grotonma.gov/storage/Historical_Commission/History/Hist_Comm_Agricultural_Report_2012.pdf; "Gibbet Hill Farm Memories Through LA Eyes," *Times Free Press* (Ayer, MA), September 27, 1995, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=gibbet&i=f&d=01011869-12312024&m=between&ord=k1&fn=times_free_press_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19950927_english_1&df=1&dt=10&cid=3140; "Obituary: William C. Conley," *Groton Herald* (Groton, MA), November 15, 2019. For the Soviet Union tour, see "Presents Illustrated Lecture," *Public Spirit* (Ayer, MA), October 12, 1967, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=gibbet&i=f&d=01011960-12311969&m=between&ord=k1&fn=the_public_spirit_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19671012_english_17&df=11&dt=20&cid=3140.

[82] "Gibbet Hill Farm Memories Through LA Eyes," *Times Free Press* (Ayer, MA), September 27, 1995, https://ayer.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=gibbet&i=f&d=01011869-12312024&m=between&ord=k1&fn=times_free_press_usa_massachusetts_ayer_19950927_english_1&df=1&dt=10&cid=3140.

[83] Oakfield Research, "Groton Farms: Final Report of the Groton Agricultural Survey Project," Groton Historical Commission (2011), part 2, 30, https://portal.grotonma.gov/storage/Historical_Commission/History/Hist_Comm_Agricultural_Report_2012.pdf.

[84] Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, Cambridge, MA: Campbell to Marion D. Campbell Trust, July 24, 1984, bk. 15799 pg. 151.

[85] Murray, Johnson, and Kulesz, *Groton at 350*, 235.

[86] Murray, Johnson, and Kulesz, *Groton at 350*, 235-237; Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, Cambridge, MA: Marion D. Campbell Trust to Gibbet Hill Farm LLC, September 5, 2000, bk. 31800 pg. 319; Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, Cambridge, MA: Restrictions, Gibbet Hill Farm LLC to Town of Groton, December 27, 2002, bk. 37519 pg. 362.

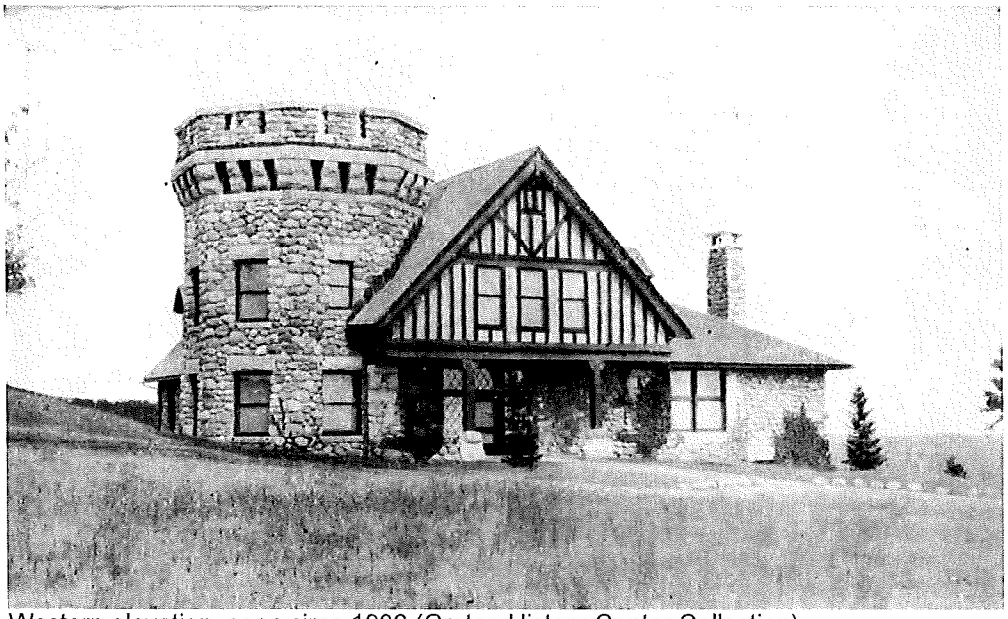
Today, the castle is one of Groton's top tourist attractions. The open-air ruins are accessible from dawn to dusk. As of this writing, the structure is degrading after being exposed to the elements with minimal maintenance for 95 years; most recently, in the winter of 2022-2023, a tree fell on the northeast corner, separating it from the rest of the structure and creating a safety hazard. An ongoing project, funded with money from the Community Preservation Act, is aiming to stabilize the castle and prevent further deterioration. This form is filed in conjunction with the project.[87]

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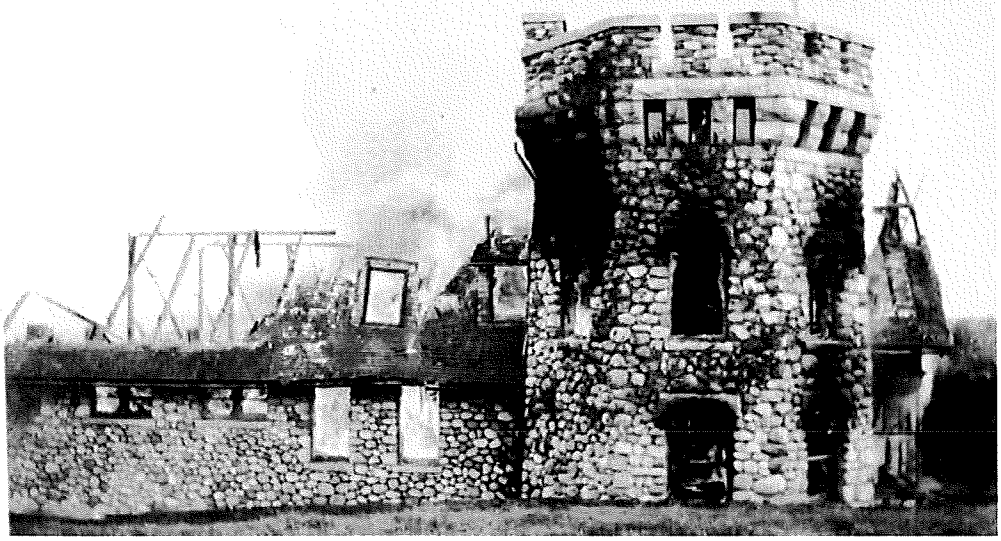
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[87] See project documentation on file with the Groton Community Preservation Committee. The first round of the project was a structural condition assessment of the castle, the funding for which was approved at the Spring 2024 Annual Town Meeting. The final report, prepared by Cirrus Structural Engineering, was submitted to the Groton Historical Commission in May 2025 and is on file. Spring 2025 Annual Town Meeting approved funding for phase two of the project, which includes bid specs for the stabilization, and the initial safety repairs.

Continuation sheet 19



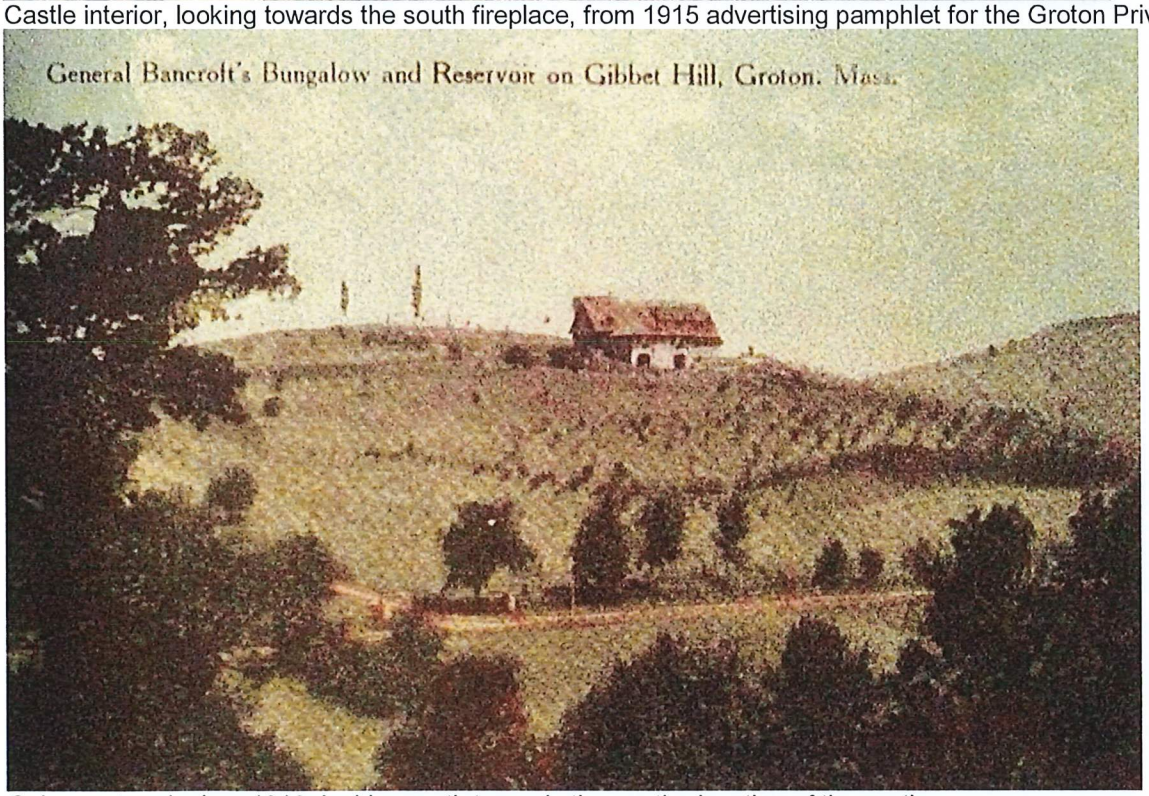
Western elevation, seen circa 1906 (Groton History Center Collection)



North elevation, seen during the fire of July 4, 1930, that destroyed much of the structure (Groton History Center Collection)



Castle interior, looking towards the south fireplace, from 1915 advertising pamphlet for the Groton Private Hospital



Color postcard, circa 1910, looking north towards the south elevation of the castle



Left: Tower and north wall seen from east, 2023; Right: Portrait of General William Amos Bancroft, before 1898, from *Biographical Review Volume XXVII*, 8.



South side of the castle on December 13, 2025, showing the sunroom addition (4) towards the left, and the main chimney in the south wing (3) left of center, which the rear (east) portion of the main block (2) on the right, and the tower (1) in the center.



The primary (west) elevation of the castle on December 13, 2025, showing the tower (1) at left, the main entrance to the right of the tower, the south wing (3) right of center, and the sunroom addition (4) at far right.



The north elevation of the castle on December 13, 2025, showing the tower (1) at right and the main block (2) at left. The safety netting is around the back wall that was destabilized by tree damage in the winter of 2022-2023.



Rear (east) side of the main block (2), at left, on December 13, 2025, showing tower (1) at right.



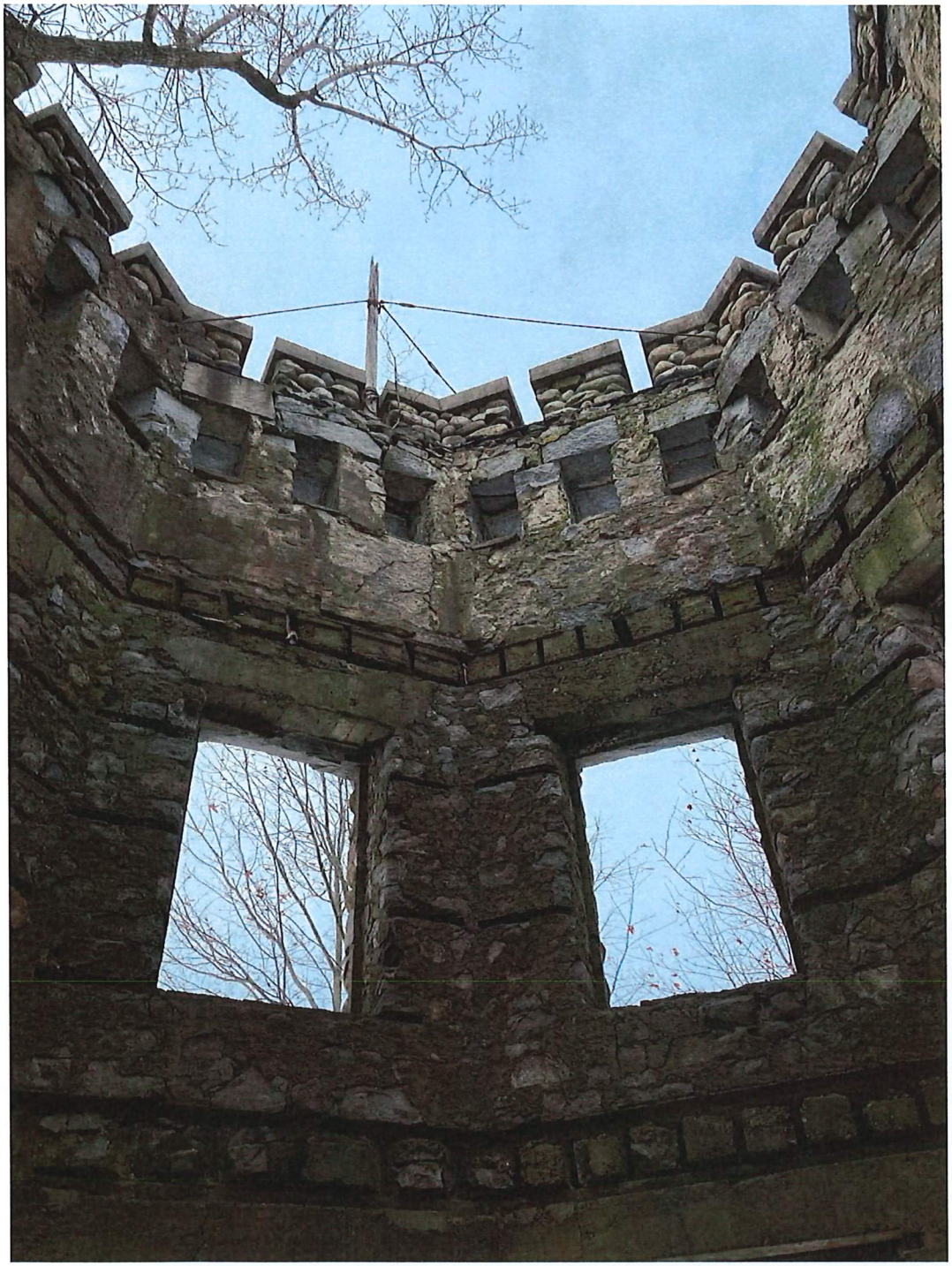
Castle interior, looking southwest from northeast corner of main block (2) towards south wing (3), on December 13, 2025.



Interior on Dec. 13, 2025, looking south into south wing (3) towards the main fireplace. The year "1906" is above the mantle.



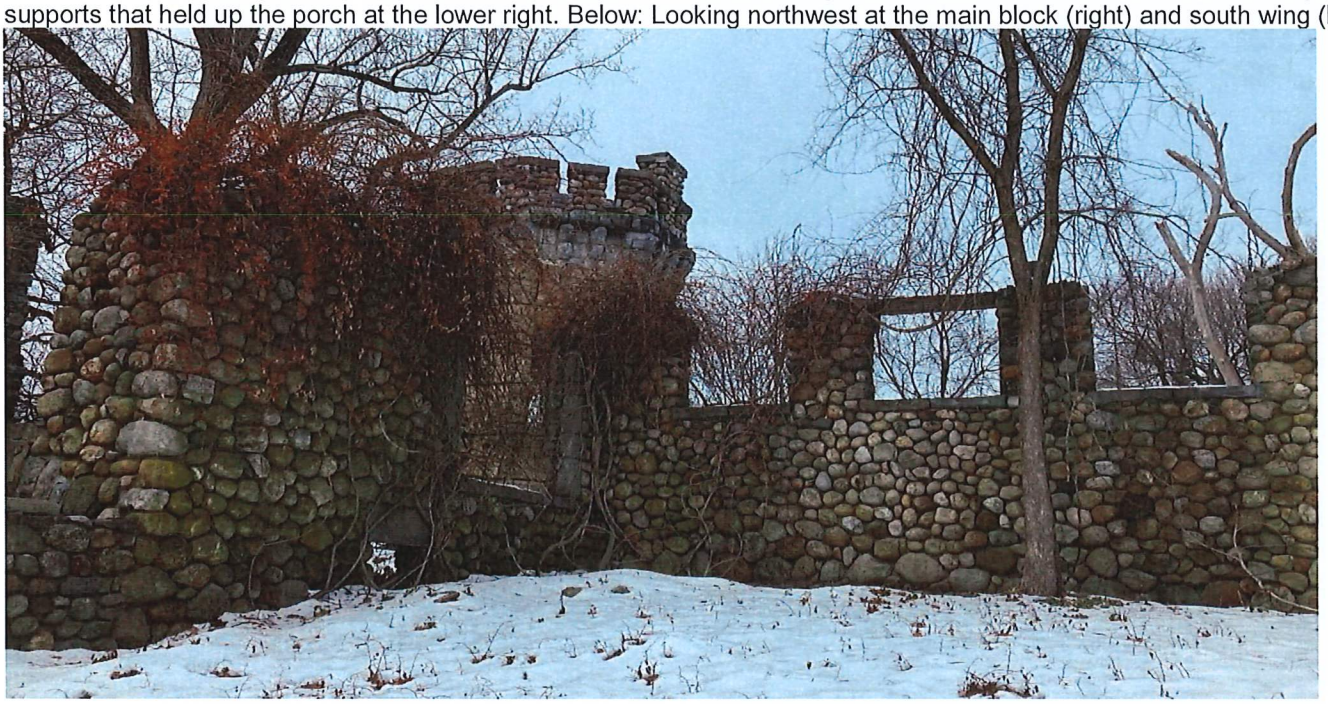
Interior of tower (1) on December 13, 2025, showing the two fireplaces and the grooves between the floors for joists.

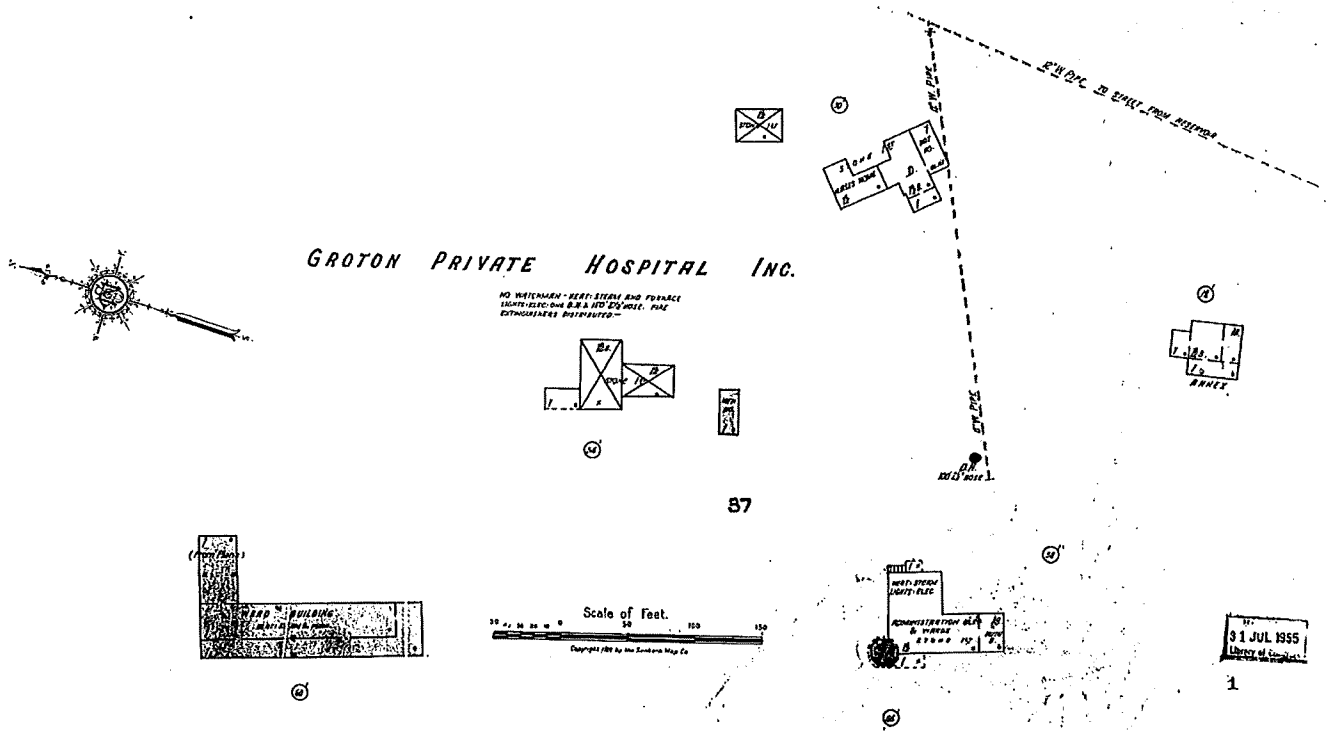


Interior of tower (1) on December 13, 2025, showing second and third levels and flagpole remnant.

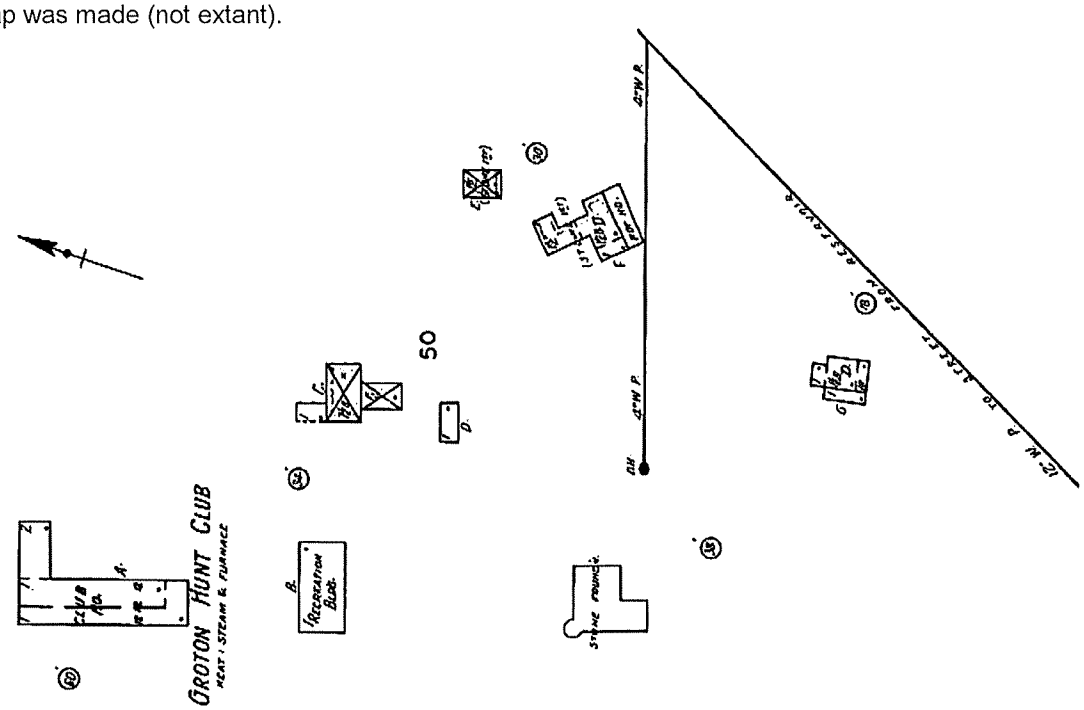


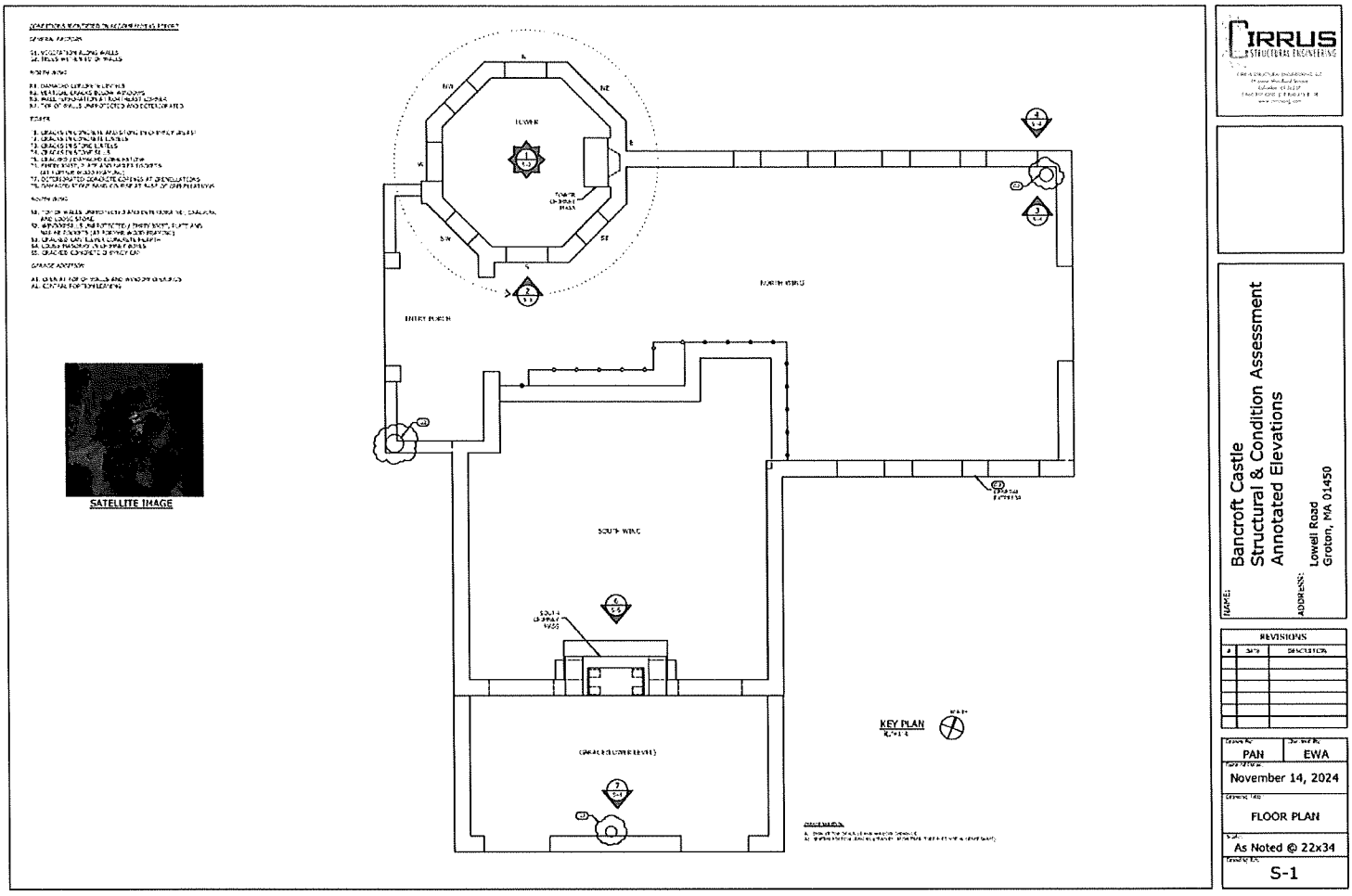
Looking south on the original front porch on December 13, 2025, showing the main entrance at left, and one of the granite supports that held up the porch at the lower right. Below: Looking northwest at the main block (right) and south wing (left).



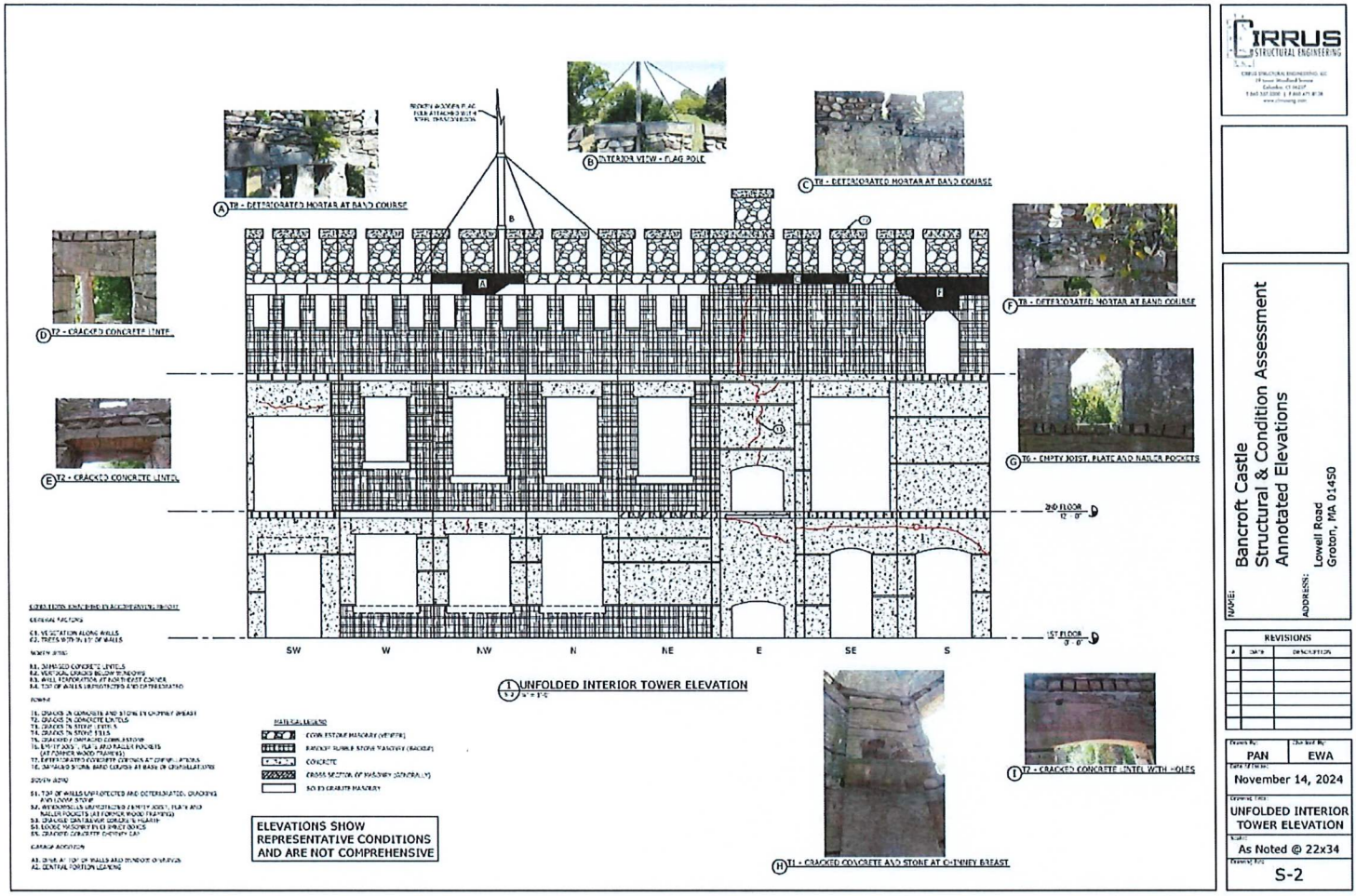


Above is the 1921 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, showing the buildings which then belonged to the Groton Private Hospital. The castle is at the lower right. The main hospital building (not extant) is in the lower left. The structure at the top, right of center, was the home and office of Dr. Harold Ayres, now a residence at 145 Lowell Road. The cottage at the far right (labeled as "Annex") is today at 143 Lowell Road. Below is the 1934 Sanborn Fire Insurance map, showing the same area when it was home to the Groton Hunt Club. The castle was then a ruin. This map shows the recreation building added by the hospital the year after the above map was made (not extant).

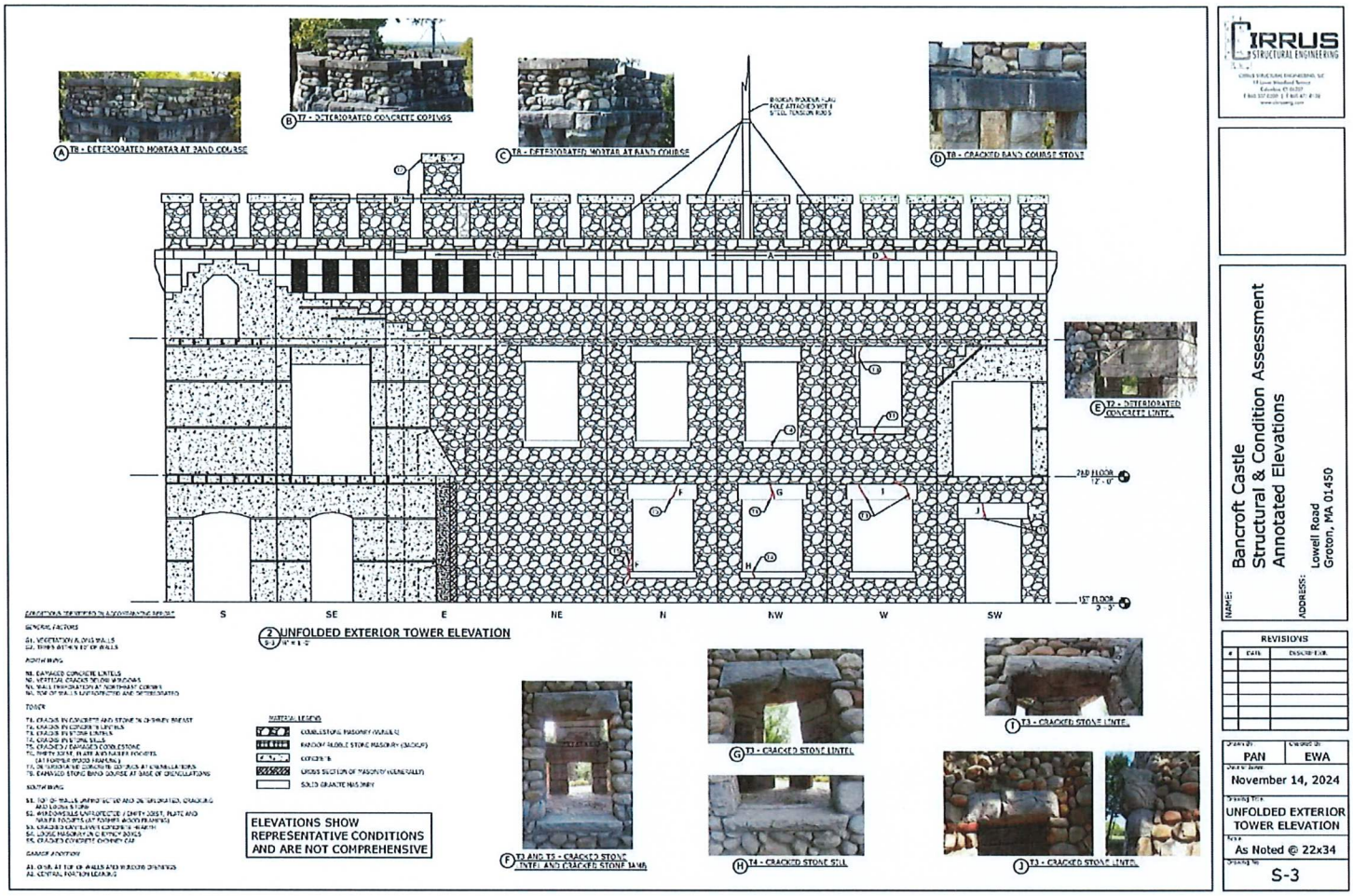




Cirrus Structural Engineering, Bancroft Castle Condition Assessment, May 2025, footprint plan



Cirrus Structural Engineering, Bancroft Castle Condition Assessment, May 2025, unfolded tower interior elevation



CIRRUS STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING

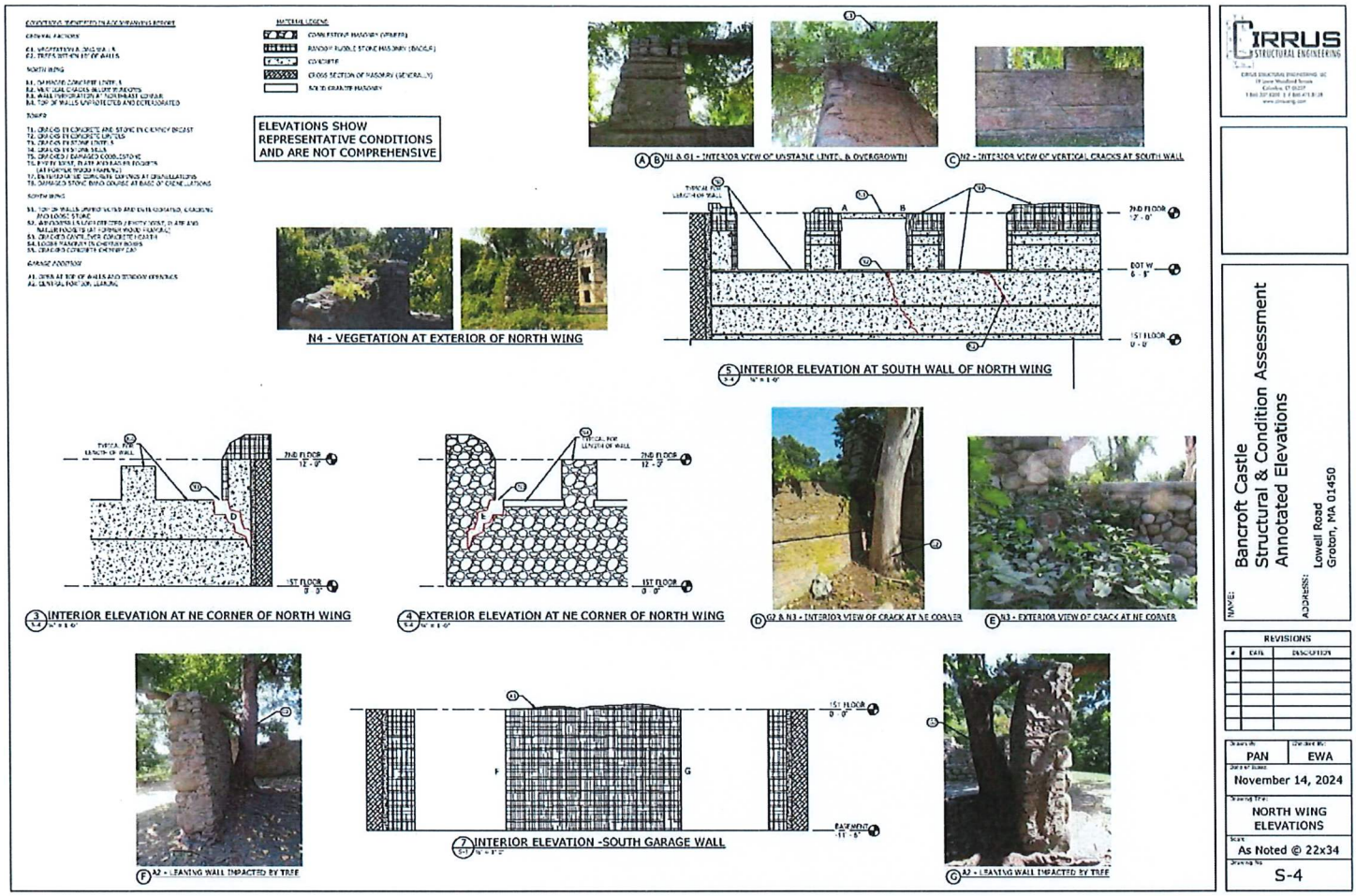
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Structural & Condition Assessment
Annotated Elevations

ADDRESS: Lowell Road
Groton, MA 01450

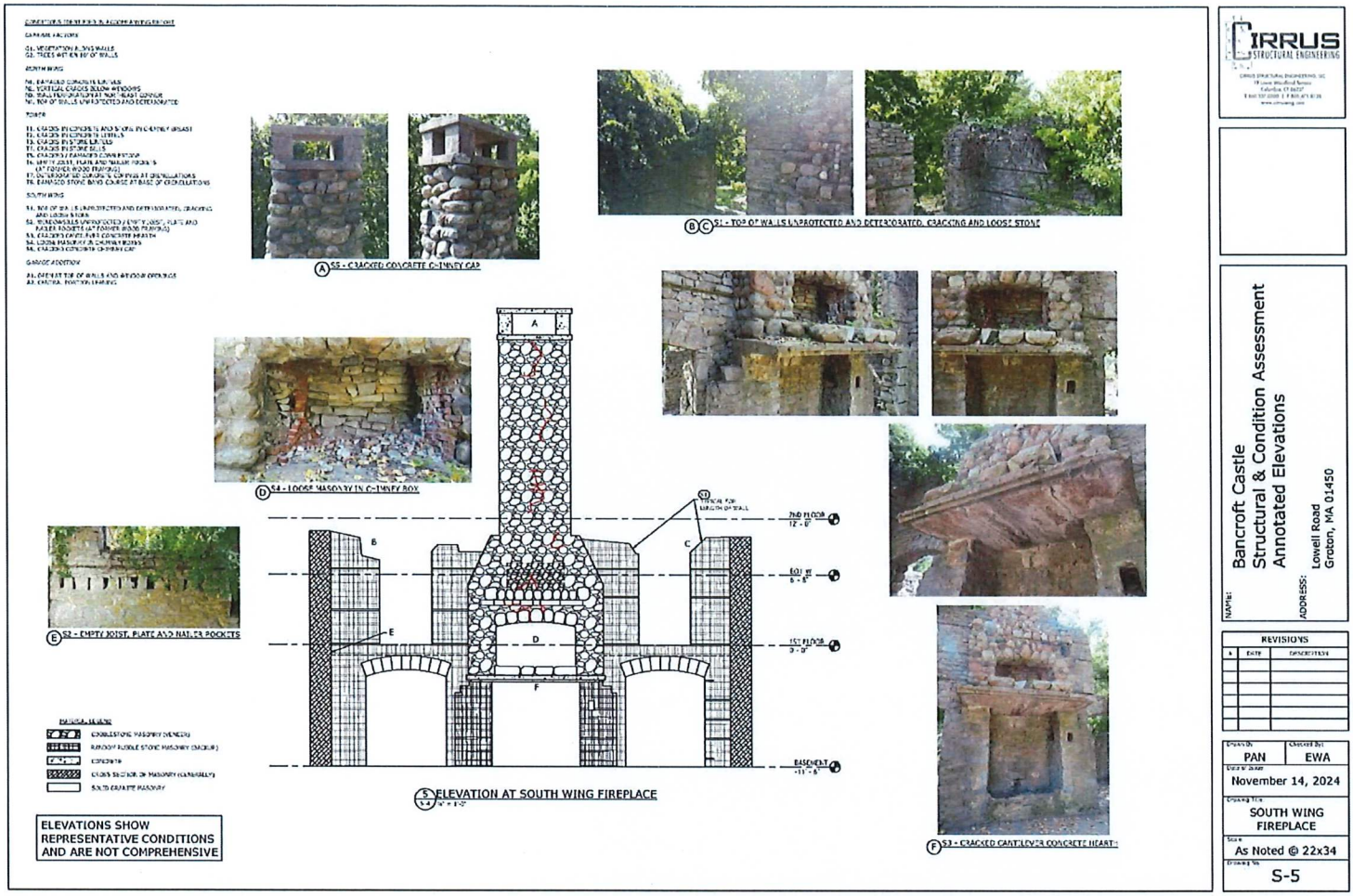
REVISIONS		
#	DATE	DESCRIPTION

Drawn By: PAN	Checked By: EWA
Issue Date: November 14, 2024	
Drawing Title: UNFOLDED EXTERIOR TOWER ELEVATION	
Scale: As Noted @ 22x34	
Drawing No: S-3	

Cirrus Structural Engineering, Bancroft Castle Condition Assessment, May 2025, unfolded tower exterior elevation



Cirrus Structural Engineering, Bancroft Castle Condition Assessment, May 2025, details of walls



Cirrus Structural Engineering, Bancroft Castle Condition Assessment, May 2025, south (main) fireplace

National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

☒ Individually eligible ☐ Eligible **only** in a historic district

☐ Contributing to a potential historic district ☐ Potential historic district

Criteria: ☒ A ☒ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Statement of Significance by Joshua R. Vollmar
The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.

Bancroft's Castle, originally known as the Shawfieldmont Bungalow, is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A, B, and C. The structure's associations with the Country Estate Era of the early twentieth century and World War I as a veterans hospital establish its significance under Criterion A. For Criterion B, the castle's strong association with General William Amos Bancroft, president of the Boston Elevated Railway, form its claim to significance. Notably, Bancroft's primary residence in Cambridge is not extant, making the castle (though only a portion of the original structure) the surviving residence most closely tied to Bancroft during his career. When considering Criterion C, it is important to note that many of the castle's original features were lost in the fire of July 4, 1930. However, the remaining design features – notably the tower and the fireplace – display locally rare examples of high-style Tudor Revival design from the early twentieth century, and the exposed concrete work and plumbing demonstrate construction techniques of the period. The structure retains integrity of setting and workmanship.