



Partners. The Messrs. Rockefeller on Fifth Avenue, New York, 1910. Courtesy Rockefeller Archive Center.

Visions of Kykuit: John D. Rockefeller's House at Pocantico Hills, Tarrytown, New York

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John D. Rockefeller, Landscape Architect (amateur), and John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Architect (manqué) and Construction Manager.

Earliest Visions

Violence from deep within the earth and Precambrian ice ages helped form the hill and the river 500 feet below it. Stone-age predecessors of the Algonquin Indians had the first visions of the hill and they settled around it. The hill was sacred to the natives who used its rocky top to send signals that could be seen for many miles in every direction and across the widest part of the great river. The Dutchmen who first sailed up that river with Henry Hudson in 1609, looking for a northwest passage to the Pacific, noted the rocky principal eminence and called it Kykuit (a Dutch word for "Lookout"). Other European and English settlers who later joined the Dutch in the Hudson Valley simply misspelled it "Kaakoot" or "Kaakout." As late as the 1920s it was still being misspelled Kijykuit (Dutch for "Peephole"). Kykuit is best pronounced in two syllables—"KY," as in "SKY" and "kuit," as in "COOT."¹

However it is spelled or pronounced, it is one of the hills that young Washington Irving climbed while he visited his cousins in Tarrytown at the end of the 18th century. Later,

Kykuit Hill inspired the vision of George W. Parsons who bought a large part of the land around it in 1866; he built a Victorian country house (Kykuit I) high on the north-east slope of the hill.²

It is also the same hill that inspired the visions of oil magnate John D. Rockefeller (1839-1937) and his son, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. (1874-1960). In the fall of 1892 they followed a map, walked the fields, climbed the hill, and decided to buy Kykuit and many surrounding parcels. They shared an enduring vision of a family compound on a great country estate surrounding and including Kykuit Hill.³

In 1893 JDR bought the first nine parcels of land in the Pocantico Hills above Tarrytown. Directly, JDR's brother and business partner, William A. Rockefeller, who was always good for advice, helped his brother by hiring a survey engineer to map accurately the consolidated lands.⁴ William A. Rockefeller and his son, Percy, wanted to share in the vision (and eventually share property lines), and insisted that JDR hire Frederick Law Olmsted's landscape design firm in March of 1894. Because Olmsted was ill and unreasonably furious and frustrated, probably due to what we now call Alzheimer's Disease, his partners, John C. Olmsted and Charles Eliot, sent Warren H. Manning (1860-1938) to help JDR plan the site of a new house on Kykuit Hill.⁵ Manning had just completed Olmsted work at the Chicago fairgrounds and at Vanderbilt's North Carolina estate, Biltmore. He spent months designing and planning the house site, access roads, and grades on and around Kykuit Hill. He must have come to Pocantico with visions of his own for Kykuit Hill. But Manning's visions were clouded from the start by JDR's impatience. Rockefeller recorded his side of the story of the earliest days of the development of the Pocantico Hills estate in his autobiographical articles *Random Reminiscences of Men and Events*:

. . . others may be surprised at my claim to be an amateur landscape architect in a small way, and my family have been known to employ a great landscape man to make quite sure that I did not *ruin the place*. The problem was, just where to put the new home at Pocantico Hills . . . I thought I had the advantage of knowing every foot of the land, all the old big trees were personal friends of mine, and with the views at any given point I was perfectly familiar . . . after this great landscape architect had laid out his plans and driven his lines of stakes, I asked if I might see what I could do with the job.⁶ (emphasis mine)

Always enthusiastic about landscape work, JDR was in direct competition with his hired professional consultant. He pored over Manning's shoulder and began to second-guess

the *expert*. But where and when did Rockefeller gain his landscape and building expertise?



Rockefeller Farmstead. Birthplace of John D. Rockefeller (1839-1937), Richford, New York. Young JDR moved with his family to Owego, then Moravia, N.Y., and to Parma, Ohio, before finally settling in Cleveland. Courtesy Rockefeller Archive Center

Rockefeller's Background

The Rockefeller name has been so bound up with New York's institutions that we forget the origins of the founding father. One of the first American billionaires was born in a one-story, two-room cottage on a poor, small farmstead in obscure Richford, New York. He moved slowly westward with his family and finally settled in Cleveland, Ohio.⁷ There, before he became a business success, he was commissioned, almost challenged, by his father, to build a new house for his parents in 1857. He drafted his own plans, hired the builders, and managed the construction. The 33 Cheshire Street house was a modest urban villa, but with a lot large enough to accommodate a garden and selected trees. This small property offered JDR his first opportunity to realize a landscape scheme. His early years in Cleveland were filled with business ventures that eventually focused on an oil refining enterprise, the Excelsior Oil Works.

Rockefeller found waste and chaos in the oil business, but he pursued a vision of industrial perfection. He surrounded himself with like-minded visionary partners, notably his

brother, William Rockefeller, Henry M. Flagler, and talented technical associates, including Samuel Andrews. They worked to build a model of modern efficiency, eliminated waste, and found many new uses for by-products of refined crude oil. Their global scheme of pipelines, rails, and ships, packaging and marketing actually drove down the cost to consumers.

In 1864, as JDR was founding an empire on black gold, he married a Cleveland girl his own age, Laura Celestia Spelman. They shared deeply religious convictions and ideals, founded a family and established their own form of domestic perfection. In almost everything he did JDR was aiming at an ideal picture of perfect order. This was not without what he called “eternal vigilance.”

By 1868, while fortune found him, JDR found a suburban villa on Euclid Avenue (later known in Cleveland as Millionaire’s Row). He personally designed the site and bought adjacent lots, had the existing house lifted off its original foundations, and moved it back away from the street. He added a new rear wing for his house staff and several superannuated relatives.⁸ Though many of his biographers claim that Rockefeller didn’t read books other than the Bible and inspirational journals, his schemes seem to have been guided by several important works on landscape design, including Frank J. Scott’s *The Art of Beautifying Suburban Home Grounds*, and Jacob Weidenmann’s *Beautifying Country Homes*, both published in 1870. There were many earlier books that Rockefeller could have turned to for practical and philosophical inspiration when it came to what he called “my special hobby”—his interest in landscape architecture: Sidney and Neff, Gervase Wheeler, Alexander Jackson Davis, Andrew Jackson Downing, Calvert Vaux and others had published their works from the late 1840s to feed the interests of the many Americans interested in the field; JDR was one of them. As a staunch Baptist he would not have read popular novels or such useless writing—that would have been sinful—but landscape literature was harmless. JDR was a driven businessman, a devoted husband and loving father, who seems to have had no vices. He spent his recreational time on fine horses, driving fast carriages, and landscape planning and construction.

Rockefeller’s next opportunity more fully to express his understanding and capability in landscape design came in 1878 at Forest Hill, his estate near Cleveland. The Euclid Avenue/Forest Hill Association, a group of development investors including JDR, built a hydropathic spa near Lake Erie. The spa was served by a private rail line from Cleveland, and it had a big Victorian, Steamboat-Gothic clubhouse surrounded by shady woods and walking paths. When the venture failed to be profitable JDR bailed out his partners and acquired the property and buildings for a private, summertime family

country retreat. He moved his permanent address there only a year later, and equipped the house with a telegraph to stay in touch with his office. Then he turned his attentions to acquiring hundreds of acres around the place and began to lay out the grounds. He planted and moved trees, built bridle paths, carriage roads, rambles and ponds. This was his main form of recreation.



Rockefeller's house at Forest Hill in 1879. JDR practiced landscape planning and construction at this 400 acre estate for 38 years. It became the traditional family summer retreat from 1884. It burned in 1917. Courtesy Rockefeller Archive Center.

How many miles of roads I have laid out in my time, I can hardly compute, but I have often kept at it until I was exhausted. While surveying roads, I have run lines until darkness made it impossible to see the little stakes and flags.⁹

It was the land that he loved, that he called home, nor the mere buildings in which he found shelter. Having and holding some earth of his own and working on the *eternal* land—this was heaven-on-earth for him. JDR worked in the naturalistic, American picturesque method of landscape design. He had a practical and intuitive understanding of natural land-forms and worked without imposing rigid geometry. Frederick Law Olmsted would have liked JDR's work.

In 1884, when business demands dictated a move to New York City, JDR bought a large, stand-alone brownstone house at 4 West 54th Street. A year later his brother, William

A. Rockefeller, bought a Hudson River estate and poured millions into improvements and additional land acquisitions. While JDR had to travel all the way back to Cleveland to enjoy his country estate, William had only to take a short train ride from Standard Oil's Manhattan headquarters to be at Rockwood Hall.

Rockwood was a large stone castle on the Hudson in North Tarrytown. It had been built in 1849 after the designs of English architect Gervase Wheeler. William bought it third-hand and proceeded to make a great show-place.¹⁰ It became a pleasant gathering place for the two Rockefeller families where all the cousins could play together and be close. There William entertained in an impressive, lavish manner. He had liveried servants in 18th-century costumes with powdered wigs, rare birds to nest in his imported trees, exotic collectibles in specially designed rooms throughout the house. JDR playfully called Rockwood "the rat trap."¹¹ What impressed him was not the ostentatious castle, but the land, the Hudson River, the views of the Tappan Zee (Sea of the Tappan Indians).

As time passed, and as the impression of the Tarrytown area sank in, JDR finally decided to follow his brother's example and buy his own place nearby:

At Pocantico Hills, New York, where I have spent portions of my time . . . in an old house where the fine views invite the soul and we can live simply and quietly, I have spent many delightful hours, studying the beautiful views, the trees, and fine landscape effects of that very interesting section of the Hudson River . . .¹²

His visions from Kykuit were of "ALL CREATION" laid out below, as if from Olympus, with Elysian Fields below.¹³ This was his earthly Paradise. Part of JDR's intrinsic understanding and love of this blessed land had to do with dominating and controlling it, shaping it to his will. This would take time and money, both of which he had, but wished to conserve. He had been pushed by his brother, William, his nephew, Percy, and by his own son to do the right thing at Pocantico Hills.

Moving Mountains

Warren H. Manning worked furiously from late 1894 to late 1895 to try to satisfy his client's visions of Kykuit, and probably his own; he drafted some 25 plans (two of which survive) with Olmsted, Olmsted and Eliot title blocks. One of the plans bears some resemblance to what was finally built¹⁴

. . . and here I fixed my stakes to show where I suggested that the roads should run, and finally the exact place where the house should be. "Look it all over," I said, "and decide which plan is best." It was a proud moment when this real authority accepted my suggestions as bringing out the most favored spots for views and agreed upon the site of the house.¹⁵

Usually quiet and deferential in his leadership style, here we see JDR uncharacteristically boastful and proud. He clearly enjoyed this informal competition, and Manning had no choice but to concede the point to his client.

Close to his planned but delayed early retirement from Standard Oil Company, JDR had made time to be at the estate to oversee the work.¹⁶ He launched a great effort at Pocantico; tools and equipment were bought, an experienced manager and laborers were hired, and the top of Kykuit Hill was being taken off when disputes began in the summer of 1895. JDR again admitted the source of the problem, saying ". . . for people no longer young wish to get the effects they desire at once." Manning's month-to-month retainer was terminated.¹⁷ After all, the best plan was not laid out by the *expert*, the *real authority*.

He had pushed too hard and fast to achieve his Utopia. Unhappy with the slow pace and high costs of the labor, JDR became disputatious and asked for his foreman's resignation, laid off the laborers, and hired a large Irvington firm that was capable and expert in excavation and quarry work. The price Rockefeller had to pay for all this was steeper than he had dreamed. Someone set fire to his stables and carriage house (actually a small complex behind the old Parsons house) on the night of September 14, 1895. Fortunately, no one was hurt but the arsonist had also laid out explosives around the main house. Investigations and an offered reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the culprit were fruitless.¹⁸

Insult followed injury when local real estate taxes were levied on the Pocantico estate based on an unrealistic and inflated property value. The estate had been growing by hundreds of acres each year with new acquisitions. Rockefeller fought back and eventually won his tax appeal, but all of these unpleasant disappointments soured his feelings for the place. JDR's visions of Kykuit began to fade somewhat just as his son's enthusiasm began to grow. In 1897 John D. Rockefeller, Jr. graduated from Brown University just as his father stepped aside from the daily and routine administrative responsibilities he had held for over 25 years at Standard Oil.¹⁹

As he had prepared to go off to college, JDR, Jr. believed he shared the same visions as his father. But during the years he was at Brown the planned great mansion on the summit of Kykuit Hill, surrounded by a vast private park, had not been built at the Pocantico estate. JDR's interest, when he was on the estate, was absorbed in moving trees, building roads and paths, and appreciating the vistas; he was looking for peace. The visions of a big house had been put aside for many reasons.

The retired magnate had always given to charity according to his means. He devoutly believed that charity purifies the heart of the true believer, and at the time he retired he was also struggling with the proper establishment of a large philanthropic trust. The mountains he wanted to move were not at Pocantico. JDR was convinced that he was called upon to use his mountains of money to help heal the sick, feed the hungry, and educate the ignorant. Meanwhile, he was beset with major business problems which took their toll on his health; he suffered from bouts of digestive illness, nervous fatigue and loss of his hair.²⁰

The "public be damned" attitude of post-Civil War railroad barons, hard-fisted industrialists, and greedy capitalists who had created powerful monopolies and manipulated stocks and bonds, all with ruthless disregard for the common worker and independent businessmen, had set in motion opposition forces that would reverse their strides.²¹ As the 19th century came to a close and new political forces gathered Populist support, the press was bound to find targets for scorn. It was supposed that many of the most powerful businessmen in America had gained their positions and wealth in more-or-less forbidden and stealthy ways. But JDR was not what we could call a "tycoon." He had not been an opportunistic overnight success. He had always conducted his personal and business affairs with decorum, and within the established rules. Though he had kept a very low profile throughout his career, JDR was one of the largest targets for the press. Because he imposed and maintained a tradition of privacy, it was interpreted as secrecy. As one of the wealthiest industrialists in the country, he was held suspect. Newspapers and magazines followed government hearings and investigations into the alleged misdeeds of the Standard Oil Company.²²

JDR was closing his very productive career under a dark cloud of controversy, even scandal. Of course this had upset and distracted him; he had always been circumspect, but the opinions of the time had become so decidedly unfriendly that he began to measure every move he made. Besides, JDR was not much interested in squandering a fortune on a vain and selfish private mansion project. He was too busy planning ways to dispose of

much of his legendary wealth and finding that the art of giving away his money was as difficult as the art of getting it.

Father and Son

The sons of other rich men may have been handicapped by being brought up with wealth but never taught the value of money. In this regard JDR, Jr. was a remarkable exception. His parents had set a family tradition of thrift with their children. Each Saturday, after morning prayers and breakfast, Bessie, Alta, Edith, and finally “Mr. John” would present their personal account books. Before their chore-earned allowance was paid, the children had to account for small necessities, treats, church offerings, and savings. It was a true-to-life debit-credit system, applied as a good teaching tool. This influenced young JDR, Jr.’s habits of thrift, financial management, and his understanding of sacrifice.

I have not words to express our gratitude . . . for the hope you give us for the future time when our turn comes to lean more on you.

I am looking to you and relying upon you to share my responsibilities with me on behalf of the family, as soon as you are ready.

JDR had watched with pleasure and pride as his son matured. He needed help and looked to his son, his “finest achievement,” to shoulder some of the crushing load of responsibilities in business and philanthropy.²³ This may remind us of the story of God and Adam; John D. Rockefeller, Jr., made in his father’s image and likeness, for love and obedience, was bound to break the mold in some way and rebel. But he was never to be condemned and cast out of the garden overlooking the Hudson River. Probably not deliberately, but instinctively, JDR, Jr. set about creating at Pocantico Hills exactly what his father had decided he did not want—a great show-place.

The Coach Barn

A replacement for the arsoned carriage house complex behind the Victorian Parsons house had to be built. Though his father had to have agreed with the plan, JDR, Jr. took charge of things and contacted Edward Palmer York (1865-1928), architect, and partner in a new firm with Philip Sawyer (1868-1949). York and Sawyer had left the firm of McKim, Mead and White based on their first partnership commission, the new campus plan and buildings at Vassar College, for which JDR had given the money. That com-

mission brought the young architects in close contact with JDR, Jr. He commissioned them to design an appropriate new stable building for the Pocantico site, about where the original building had been. The vision of Kykuit in 1900, of architects York and Sawyer, was from an enormous stone schloss of a Coach Barn. Their new Rockefeller estate building was every bit an American Rhine stronghold, like many of the 19th-century castles on the Hudson. By the end of the summer of 1902 the new Coach Barn was complete, its great granite blocks quarried from the estate. It was designed to fit into a Hudson Valley architectural tradition already forty years old. It appeared permanent and ancient, as though it had always been there. However, and this is an odd scene, the old shingle-covered Parsons house stood just in front of this giant's castle.²⁴ York and Sawyer asked for and received permission to publish pictures and a plan of their heroic Pocantico Coach Barn. It appeared in the September issue (No. 9, 1902) of *Architectural Review*. However, in order to maintain the principles of privacy imposed by JDR, the building was not identified in the magazine as belonging to him. He wished to avoid even this apparently harmless press.



The high-priests of design. Edward Palmer York (1865-1928), left, his partner, Philip Sawyer (1868-1949), center, and office staff. Wearing folded prints of drawings to celebrate a new commission, they also had an office victory song to chant on the occasion. Courtesy Avery Library.

With JDR, Jr. taking proprietary interest and supervising the activity at the Pocantico estate and either because of the new improvements or in spite of them, his father found another property, not near Tarrytown and not even in New York, but in New Jersey. JDR decided to acquire a third estate at Lakewood. The town of Lakewood, New Jersey,

was a quiet winter spa in the Pinelands. After it was opened to rail service in 1866, it advertised as a vacation resort with claims that its winter temperatures were ten degrees warmer than in New York City. There were pleasant hotels, guest houses, and rooming establishments along its quaint village streets. In 1899, while JDR was visiting at Lakewood with his friend, E.M. Johnson, he was invited to play a round of golf. He was interested, but not sure enough of himself to play in public. After a private lesson where no one could see, he found that he not only liked the game but was quite good at it. Within a few days he had become a dedicated duffer.²⁵ The Lakewood area was by far a more friendly place than New York. There JDR had other senior retired businessmen, like himself, with whom he could swap old stories and play golf. There he felt an equal among colleagues, unthreatened by young and sometimes avaricious petitioners for his time and his money.



Rockefeller's new stables (Coach Barn) at Pocantico Hills. Photo from *Architectural Review*, September, 1902.

Rockefeller bought the old Ocean County Country Club, buildings, furnishings, land and all, but the place needed a great deal of work. In 1902, after asking his golfing friends about who they would recommend to aid him with the rehabilitation, he hired Dunham A. Wheeler (1861-1938). Wheeler was the son of the prodigious and notable American decorator, Candace Thurber Wheeler (1827-1923), and had taken control and leadership of Associated Artists as his mother, its founder, retired in 1900.²⁶ During the negotiations to assemble the land and work out the final price for the Lakewood property, JDR, Jr. married Miss Abby Greene Aldrich (1874-1948), a Providence girl. They had met when JDR, Jr. was at Brown University. It was a slow, smoldering

courtship of almost six years. Abby's father was Senator Nelson Wilmarth Aldrich, a nationally powerful political figure. It was a match made for the press (power marries money), but John and Abby were genuinely good friends from the first.²⁷

Fire II (The Loss of Kykuit I)

The new Pocantico Coach Barn had just been completed and occupied in 1902 as the new Lakewood estate was acquired and work begun on renovation designs there, when the old Parsons House (Kykuit I) burned to the ground, on September 17, 1902. This fire did not seem as suspicious as the fire on September 14, 1895. The senior Rockefellers were at Forest Hill, JDR, Jr. and Abby were in New York City, but on the night of the fire Alta Rockefeller and her husband, E. Parmalee Prentice were in the house with several staff. Parmalee was the hero of the disaster. Again no one was hurt, but it was like lightning striking twice at the same place and it further clouded JDR's visions of Kykuit.²⁸ Nevertheless, he continued to buy neighboring property even though he didn't spend much time there. He also had Willie Dunn, the most famous golf course landscape designer of the time, come to Pocantico to help lay out the links around Kykuit Hill. With the loss of the Parsons House the senior Rockefellers moved into the old Kent house on the estate while JDR, Jr. and Abby lived in the old Rufus Weeks house nearby. It was a wedding gift from JDR, and the younger Rockefellers called their half-timbered cottage Abeyton Lodge.

The press covered the story of the fire, and it was natural that everyone would assume that JDR would rebuild. Several bold architects, hankering for an important commission for Rockefeller's house, submitted their requests for consideration. York and Sawyer sent along photo prints of the same pictures that had been published in *Architectural Review* along with their proposal to provide services to rebuild the house at Pocantico. All petitions were rejected. Almost immediately after the Kykuit I fire JDR, Jr. contacted Chester Holmes Aldrich (1871-1940), an architect with the office of Carrère and Hastings, and coincidentally a distant cousin of Abby.²⁹ The two young men met in October, about three weeks after the fire, to discuss the situation at the estate. JDR, Jr. asked Aldrich to submit a statement of "the terms upon which you would prepare the plans for a proposed house at Pocantico Hills . . ." On November 3rd and again on November 7th the two were in communication over the new house design. By Christmas the plans were taking shape; this was all unbeknownst to JDR. He also had considered rebuilding, but he had a different architect in mind, Dunham A. Wheeler. JDR, Jr. had to write to his friend, Aldrich, with discouraging news:

Since I saw you last my father has come East and I find that his ideas with reference to building are so indefinite thus far, and in fact the question of whether he will build at all so undecided, that for the present I think it best to lay this matter on the table. Very likely the subject will come up more definitely in a few weeks or months.³⁰

On New Year's Eve, 1902, Abby and JDR, Jr. entertained Chester Aldrich and his life-long companion-sister, Miss Amey, at their West 54th Street house. As part of the evening's entertainment the two couples enjoyed a presentation of Chester's plans for the proposed house at Pocantico Hills. On the first day of 1903 their visions of Kykuit were bright. Chester H. Aldrich and JDR, Jr. had simply made up their minds for JDR; it was a hatless conspiracy of youth and enthusiasm, but a conspiracy nonetheless.

JDR, Jr. found out about Wheeler's plans and didn't like it much. While his father was enjoying the entertainment value of reviewing Wheeler's plans for both the Golf House project and for the house on Kykuit Hill, JDR, Jr. found that he couldn't interest him in the Aldrich plans.



Golf House, Rockefeller's third estate at Lakewood, New Jersey. Renovations and improvements were designed from 1902 to 1905 by architect Dunham A. Wheeler (1861-1938), Associated Artists. Courtesy Rockefeller Archive Center.

In the meantime, William Adams Delano (1874-1960), a close friend and office associate with Aldrich, had found an important private client, and one worth leaving Carrère and Hastings for. The new firm of Delano and Aldrich was founded in 1903 on the strength of their first real commission, for the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore, Maryland.³¹ The informal 1902-03 design work by Aldrich on the Kykuit house didn't

really count as a partnership commission. Unfortunately, Aldrich would have to wait for a long while to bring in the Rockefeller house project.



William Adams Delano (1874-1960), Delano and Aldrich, architects.
Photo (c. 1910) courtesy of Avery Library.

Aldrich had drawn and revised the Kykuit plans several times for JDR, Jr. from the end of 1902 through the summer of 1904, with no positive results. Both young men may have been frustrated, but JDR, Jr. was embarrassed as well. On August 5, 1904, he wrote to Chester with more discouraging news:

Frankly, I expect that my father will finally put the work in the hands of this man (Wheeler) who has been working for him, and in whom he has much confidence. I may say to you in equal frankness and in confidence, that the elevation which this man has prepared, is not, in my opinion, satisfactory . . .³²



Chester Holmes Aldrich (1871-1940), Delano and Aldrich, architects.
Photo (c. 1910) courtesy of J. Winthrop Aldrich, N.Y. State Dept. of
Environmental Protection.

The uphill struggle was growing more difficult for the young, albeit well-meaning, conspirators. But JDR, Jr.'s vision of Kykuit was in trouble. He didn't like Wheeler's work at all, but his father defended Wheeler when he had to, writing to his son, ". . . the reason I like him is that he can do as well at furnishing a house." However, Wheeler had made an administrative mistake at Rockefeller's Golf House in Lakewood. JDR, Jr. and the family business office staff interpreted the extra fees Wheeler collected from other project consultants and builders as venal. Wheeler had all but finished his plans for the Pocantico house on Kykuit Hill, and had only the specifications to write when he was relieved of what had been an informal commission from the start. Wheeler had no contract and had lost his opportunity. He had simply trusted the passing fair relationship he had developed with JDR. But blood was indeed thicker than his nonexistent contract. JDR, Jr. had won a contest of wit, eliminated Aldrich's competition and expected the

work to move along, finally. It didn't. What he had done was to attack Wheeler's work as inferior and old-fashioned when compared to the plans of his Ecole-trained friend, Aldrich.

JDR, Jr. was an admirer of good architecture; he had an educated eye for the style of the time. His liberal arts education, personal observations, and his association with other young men of discerning tastes and culture encouraged him to want to participate in the design process. JDR, Jr. saw that Dunham Wheeler's work had not the polish of men ten years his junior. Wheeler had cut his design teeth in the 1880s on what Vincent Scully calls the "Stick Style" and "Shingle Style," mannerist American Victorian architecture, inventive, but passé. Architecture had become an *ivory tower* professional art, as practiced by Delano and Aldrich and their generation, that had left Wheeler's aesthetic out of time. But JDR, Jr.'s criticism of Wheeler's design work was unintentionally tantamount to attacking his own father's tastes. After all, JDR had spent a great deal of time on Wheeler's plans, and therefore would have proudly shared design authorship.

After paying off Wheeler and hiring Delano and Aldrich it took another year (1905-1906) comparing what Aldrich proposed with what Wheeler had drawn. A great many meetings, revisions, and adjustments had to be endured before the documents were ready for contractors to estimate. However, as their visions of Kykuit merged and brightened, the rest of the world caved in on the Rockefeller men.

If the press had been unkind to JDR in the past, and by every evidence it had, the new wave of journalistic attacks would surpass any that had gone before. In 1904, writing for *McClure's* magazine, Ida Minerva Tarbell (1857-1944) published her "History of the Standard Oil Company." After her series of popular articles a best-selling book by that title was published, the public drank it in and called for more. Ida Tarbell stalked the retired magnate, visited the precincts of his estates, secretly followed him, even into his Baptist Church, and presumed to lay his very "Character" before her readers. Her critical observations included the following:

Mr. Rockefeller's homes force several reflections on one. Certainly they show his cult of the unpretentious. No one of the three houses he occupies has any claim to rank among the notable homes of the country. They are unpretending even to the point of being conspicuous. Not only that, they show him to have no pleasure in noble architecture.³³



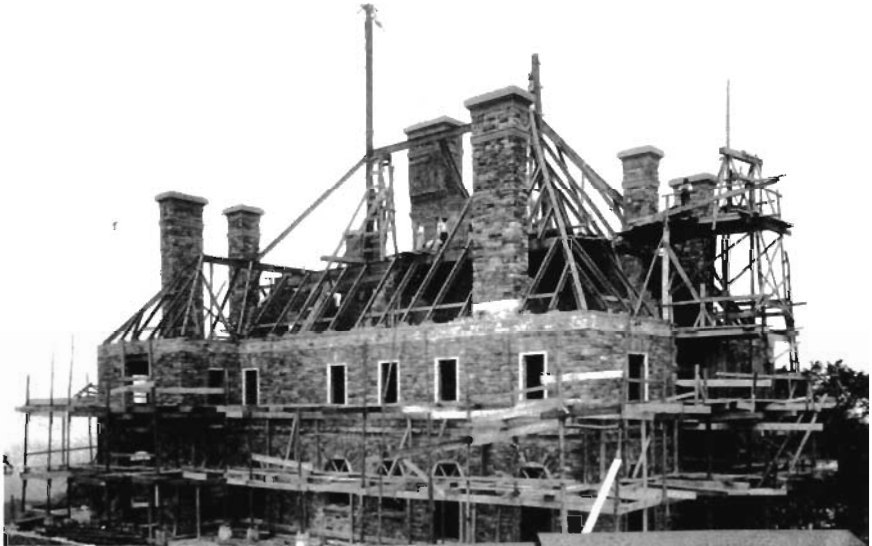
John D. Rockefeller with a fez. Generalized Alopecia had taken all of his hair. *Human Life Magazine*, vol. 1, no. 1, April, 1905.

Little that Tarbell wrote in her 1905 “Character Study” was helpful to the delicate condition of JDR. His son suffered along with him, wounded and disillusioned. Here it is important to consider the deep, fundamental faith to which the Rockefellers clung. In 1898, JDR, Jr. had been hailed as the “model young man” as he first came on the scene in New York. He was clean, honest, open, hardworking, and active in social improvements and community betterment programs. In 1901, he became leader of the men’s Bible study class at the Fifth Avenue Baptist Church. This was all with the best intentions, but JDR, Jr. used his platform to play apologist for his father’s business past.

Derision followed, and both Rockefellers were treated to a drubbing in the press. The influence on public opinion of newspapers and magazines, before the days of non-print journalism, was powerful. Their lives in turmoil, their reputations besmirched, the Rockefellers took lessons from and found comfort in the Book:

And if the world hate thee, ye know that it hated me before it hated thee. John 15, 18:

Tarbell would never write so scathing a profile of anyone again. It took her the rest of her long career to attempt to live down the name she had gained —“muckraker.”³⁴



Building Kykuit II. Construction progress photo 16, August 2, 1907, Thompson-Starrett Co., R.W. Grange Album. Courtesy Rockefeller Archive

JDR, Jr. left the country in 1905 on a curative vacation trip to France with his wife, Abby. After an extended tour of New England when they returned to America, JDR, Jr. was bound and determined to show Tarbell wrong. The big house would be built on Kykuit Hill. The young man took hold of the project, had the architects finish the design, sought advice on the right builders from his cousin Percy, and selected the Thompson-Starrett Company. That relatively young contracting firm was headed by Henry S. Thompson (1874-1947), a former associate of Percy's in Standard Oil's overseas operations. Thompson's partner, William A. Starrett (1877-1932), was one of a number of Starrett brothers who had worked with architects, engineers, and builders in

post-fire Chicago.³⁵ W.A. Starrett had come to New York with his brothers and cut his teeth on the 1902 Flat Iron Building construction project. By the time Delano and Aldrich were completing their Kykuit plans Thompson-Starrett Company was just completing the tall, new Rockefeller Block, a commercial office building in Cleveland, Ohio. All of the right connections were made. With almost a snap of his fingers, JDR, Jr.'s vision of Kykuit was all but achieved, he thought. Mobilizing construction only in late August of 1906, Thompson-Starrett was very slow to make progress. They missed the best construction season and had to build through a bitter cold winter, exposed to the fearful elements high up on Kykuit Hill. It was probably like building a 500-foot-high skyscraper.³⁶

Design and construction projects are usually fraught with complex details and motivated by strong personalities. This project was no different, but more interesting because of the people involved. The first real dispute was JDR, Jr.'s decision to hire Ogden Codman, Jr. (1863-1951) to design and decorate the interior of the new Kykuit house. This was considered a serious betrayal by Aldrich. The fledgling architects, Delano and Aldrich, had simply assumed that their design contract would be extended to include additional fees that would come with the responsibility for the interiors and decorative work. Their protests were considered and debated, but JDR, Jr. had to point out to the disappointed architects that they had no background experience or completed works to visit and judge in that realm—Codman did.³⁷ Ogden Codman was a well-known architect of the American Renaissance (1876-1917). In 1897 he had co-authored *The Decoration of Houses* with Edith Wharton. Abby and JDR, Jr. had visited homes in New England that were impressive Codman creations. For Delano and Aldrich, it was no use arguing the point with their client. Besides, as the walls emerged from the hilltop construction site, JDR, Jr. was already making plan changes beyond those that Codman would insist upon.

Delano and Aldrich would have quite enough to do to keep up with plan revisions, monitor construction, and certify payments to the builder. The plans reveal, however, that Delano and Aldrich had invested some time in designing the interiors before Codman was brought into the project. They had been designing for JDR, based on the things he liked from Wheeler's designs. Because of that and a variety of other reasons, JDR, Jr. wanted Codman to design the interiors, but not rule them. Abby and JDR, Jr. spent a great deal of time at furniture shops, antique dealers, and decorators' establishments in New York and Boston. They visited at least 20 dealers and selected things that they asked Codman to see later and reject or approve for stylistic suitability. For his

part, Codman went to England and France to shop for appropriate material including framed art, marble fireplaces, hardware and carpets for Kykuit II.

JDR, Jr. had another idea to gain some economy of scale while the house was being built. Since he had the architects and builders on the site, he came up with a renovation program for the big stone Coach Barn. The Rockefellers had enthusiastically acquired new automobiles and motor driven work vehicles for the estate. Though it was only five years old, the Coach Barn required major alterations; it was fitted out for body and motor maintenance, additional staff apartments, a new heating system, a new egress stair, and other major modernizations. Delano and Aldrich provided the design work and Thompson-Starrett executed the renovations through the summer and fall of 1907. The York and Sawyer plan was changed, but the grand exterior was faithfully kept.

There were no more delays or objections from JDR. His son was spending a great deal of time and money on the estate that would have attracted his attention had he not been dealing with family problems. Bessie Rockefeller Strong was in France, mortally ill. In the spring of 1906 Laura and JDR took ship to be with her. After several weeks in France, however, he had to return to America. Subpoena-servers waited for JDR in Cleveland, New York City, and at Tarrytown. JDR and his brother, William, were called to testify in federal district court in the summer of 1906, in Chicago. Sadly, his first born, Bessie, died in his absence.

A Man of Real Capability—W. Welles Bosworth

For its part, Thompson-Starrett Company was being very careful on Kykuit Hill to document every move; each change from the original house plans and specifications was weighed for its value. The firm also took record photographs of the progress of the work.³⁸ As the stone walls of Kykuit II (Kykuit I was the old wooden Parsons house) emerged still higher, JDR, Jr. hired William Welles Bosworth (1869-1966), an architect and landscape designer. It was Bosworth's cheerful task to design the gardens around the new house on Kykuit Hill. Bosworth and JDR, Jr. got along quite well throughout the design process and through the construction project. It is Bosworth's visions of Kykuit that can be seen now, eighty-six years after he came to Pocantico Hills. His garden designs unified the Delano and Aldrich house and connected it to the hilltop, surrounding and engulfing the building in seven distinct but connected gardens.

Bosworth, an MIT graduate, had been a protégé of Frederick Law Olmsted. He had worked with H.H. Richardson, studied in London with Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, and traveled through Europe to see first-hand the world's finest architecture. Bosworth had gone to Paris, studied at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, and after graduation worked for a French design firm. Like Delano and Aldrich, Bosworth had also worked with Carrère and Hastings before opening his own office in 1901. His training, talent, experience and personality earned him rank among other architects and the admiration of JDR, Jr. As the construction project on Kykuit hill drove on there were mistakes and fatal flaws found all about. All the other designers and the builders were found wanting, but Bosworth could literally do no wrong. He was the *divine artist* in the Classical tradition who created magic for the Rockefellers. He selected just the right vegetation, convinced his clients to commission beautiful and original sculpture and fountains with special effects of every kind. These were built into his schemes around the house. This delighted JDR, Jr., who often and successfully petitioned his father to foster Bosworth's work by paying enormous amounts in extra costs.

It was under the influence of this persuasive, charming, and sophisticated aesthete that JDR, Jr. found his own feet as a collector and connoisseur of fine art. Bosworth stood between the Rockefeller men for the first three years and correctly interpreted their different visions of Kykuit. Somehow in his work Bosworth also managed to satisfy JDR's need to see the eternal landscape truth; it was by no means easy to impress the aging amateur landscape architect.

Bosworth also designed several structures in the Kykuit gardens, almost as musical punctuation. They include the Stone Teahouse, a garden folly that he and JDR, Jr. took very seriously; the Venus Temple, which remained empty for six years before the Rockefellers acquired the controversial Altoviti Aphrodite; the enchanted Cave Room under the Venus Temple; and the delicate Terrace Arbor, with its carved scenes from the LaFontaine fables executed by Francois Michel Louis Tonetti.³⁹ Original sculpture art by other Bosworth friends was cast in bronze, gold plated, and sprayed with fountain water lighted at night from below shimmering pools. It was a wonderland of delicious theatrical attractions but without decadence.

The Orangerie

Thompson-Starrett had been given the construction contract for the house in July of 1906, another contract for the renovations to the Coach Barn in May of 1907, and still

another for the construction of the gardens, each kept as a separate account. Then, on June 18, 1908, the builders were honored with a fourth contract. JDR, Jr. had acquired a collection of rare orange trees. He bid against the Baron de Rothschild (a Standard Oil competitor abroad) to purchase a grove of delicate, historically important trees from the Marquis D'Aux.⁴⁰ The deal made, and the trees about to be uprooted from Le Mans for shipment from France, JDR, Jr. commissioned Bosworth to design a large Orangerie. The building (216' long, 45' wide, and 26' clear interior height) was to be the winter housing for the protection of the trees. Meanwhile, Bosworth had designed a special terrace on the west slope of Kykuit Hill for their summertime outings; the trees were to be kept in large wooden tubs and shuttled back and forth from the gardens to the Orangerie building. The architectural plans were ready in May of 1908, and by the onset of winter the building was finished and ready.

The Orangerie construction was meant from the start to be fast and cheap, the materials common and easily found. But, like everything at Pocantico, it became a difficult process. There were propositions for change (change orders) at least once a week throughout the construction. In the end, with the building complete, heated, and occupied by the precious citrus grove, JDR, Jr. found fault with small parts. In vain he asked Thompson-Starrett to return and make corrections. He pursued his points, through Bosworth, over the next five years without satisfaction. Part of the problem was, as William A. Starrett had complained to JDR, Jr., that Bosworth's plans were neither accurate nor complete. This may be especially true of the foundations. Bosworth had not the engineering background to design the understructure that was built according to his drawings. The site chosen for the building couldn't have been a worse one for soil conditions. It was a soft, wet area, and long concrete piles had to be driven, not to refusal, but to depth, depending on side surface friction. Some shifting has thereafter taken place; a wall-through crack and wandering columns have resulted, but they are not dangerous defects. Thompson-Starrett had correctly recommended a grid of subsurface concrete grade beams to knit the walls and columns structurally together. This would have prevented independent motion and settlement. However, the investment involved in labor and materials was considered too large.



Kykuit II complete. Delano and Aldrich, architects. Interiors designed by Ogden Codman, Jr. Landscape design by W.W. Bosworth. Occupied in fall of 1908, but considered complete in January, 1909. Courtesy Rockefeller Archive Center.

Thanksgiving

In the fall of 1908, the house on Kykuit Hill was all but finished. However, as Delano and Aldrich earlier said, it represented a complex series of planning compromises.⁴¹ The architects had started with Aldrich's plans, as reviewed and adjusted by JDR, Jr.; they had incorporated Wheeler's ideas, as reviewed and adjusted by JDR; the builders had made certain practical revisions, and further changes were made by Ogden Codman. Delano and Aldrich were not satisfied with what had happened over the twenty-seven months of construction. Though complete in the winter of 1909, the house paled in comparison to the surrounding gardens by Bosworth. Worse than that, the house was considered a failure by JDR and his wife, Laura. The first formal family gathering in the as yet unfurnished Kykuit II was their 1908 Thanksgiving feast. The main room in the house, and most impressive feature of the floor plan, the Music Hall, contained the grand, new Aeolian organ. It was an electric player contraption, with perforated music rolls, built into the house as work progressed. The organ had double pipes at the console and a set of pipes in the third floor, above an egg-shaped plaster hemisphere. A large, open oculus in the first floor ceiling, above the Music Room, allowed the organ sounds from above the dome and from the main console to resonate throughout the house. At

the outset JDR, Jr. had brought in the organist of the Fifth Avenue Baptist Church to deal with the Aeolian Company's design and specifications. It was a great success at first, producing heavenly sounds of well-known Protestant hymns. But the organ had constant maintenance and adjustment problems that continued for many years; it was finally removed by Nelson A. Rockefeller in the 1960s.

In the late fall of 1908, it became obvious that the chimneys in the new house didn't draw properly. Smoke sometimes filled rooms where there was no fire in the hearth. Other fireplaces worked well one day and didn't the next. It seems that one or another chimney would draw smoke down the flue from a chimney that was being used. This was cause for great displeasure for JDR for several good reasons, one being Laura's frail health caused by her weak lungs. During the construction JDR had insisted on having a special consultant make quite sure that the fireplaces and chimneys would be perfect. They were not satisfactory, and he was outraged. Because there was not proper floor damping and interstitial insulation, the supply and drain pipes in the structure were heard when bathrooms were used. That may have been embarrassing, but the coal trolley system in the basement made an annoying racket. The winter of 1909 was one of discontent for the inmates of Kykuit. Of course the magazine writers didn't know about these practical problems. There were several favorable articles that were expected finally to refute Tarbell's criticism of JDR. But the house was not "noble architecture," and something had to be done to make the house not only comfortable and functional, but suitable for one of the wealthiest American families.

JDR was too generous to criticize his son for the house problems. He was well aware of the hard work of supervision and management that his son had given the project for almost three years. The architects were brought back to find ways to make corrections. Their analysis was only more proof of the failure of the house. There were not enough servants' rooms in the attic, and they were too small and dark under the rake of the big hip roof. The third floor, designed for guests, was a collection of dormer rooms, unimpressive spaces with nothing splendid about them, and hard to furnish.

Kykuit III

Edith Rockefeller McCormick recommended to her father that if the place had to be rebuilt, her architect would be the ideal designer. In 1907 Harold Fowler McCormick and Edith had hired Frank Lloyd Wright to design their suburban estate near Chicago, but soon fired him to select Charles A. Platt (1861-1933).⁴² Edith's satisfaction with

Platt's 1908 to 1913 design of Villa Turicum was an influence on her father. In November of 1910, after several unresolved meetings with the designers over the house rehabilitation plans, JDR told his son that he wanted to replace Delano and Aldrich with Platt. That was bad enough, but his father also wanted to replace Bosworth with Duncan Candler, a fancy, young Fifth Avenue architect. JDR, Jr. would hear none of it; he had the best vision of Kykuit from his proprietary vantage point. His last several years of experience dictated that he had to stand his ground, maintain control, and do what he knew was the right thing. Besides, he had to consider friendships and family ties between Abby and Chester Aldrich.

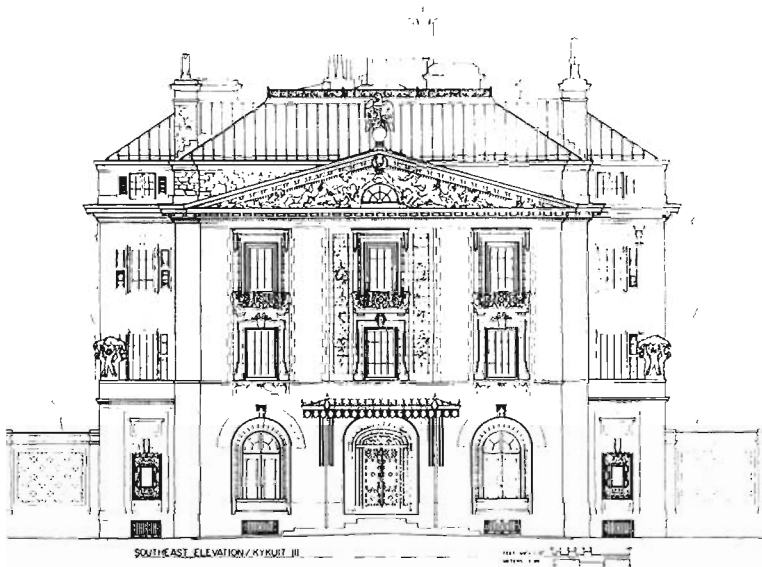
The project team was brought back together: Delano and Aldrich were directed to make the final renovation plans; Codman, likewise, was to coordinate his interiors and decoration work with the architects. W. Welles Bosworth, who had never discontinued his garden designs, was also kept on to redesign the principal elevation of the renovated house, and to design an extended forecourt. In his partner's absence, William A. Delano filed a protest when JDR, Jr. insisted on having Bosworth redesign the front facade of Kykuit III. To head off a dispute between the two architects JDR, Jr. had to be firm; he put his well-reasoned position clearly in writing to Delano:

Bosworth has not been altogether comfortable in the embarrassing position he has consented to occupy only however at my request . . . It has always been pleasant for me to work with your office and I should have regretted the necessity of finishing the building enterprise elsewhere.⁴³

This message was meant to settle the question and eliminate a potential argument, lest there be any misunderstandings. It also delivered the original linen drawing of the front facade elevation (now lost) from Delano and Aldrich's office to Bosworth's office. To play peacemaker between the Rockefeller men, Bosworth was adroit enough to call in Charles A. Platt as a consultant. The 1910 redesign team therefore included Delano and Aldrich, Codman, Platt, and Bosworth. JDR, Jr. collected all of their views with regard to the geometry and ornamentation of the principal facade and its relationship to the as yet shapeless forecourt. The issues of scale and proportion were studied for months by JDR, Jr.'s team. But his father got what he wanted; he had called for the renovation to produce a higher, flat-roofed house that did not expose the chimneys to cold winds, and that would give full height to the guest rooms and the servants' quarters.

Civic Duty

There was a gap in the management continuity, and things slowed down at the estate. In 1910, JDR, Jr. was selected to be the foreman of a grand jury in New York City. It was not a job he really wanted, but he was bound to do his civic duty. The City's D.A. wanted an investigation of organized crime in relation to the "White Slave Trade" (prostitution). JDR, Jr. later said "I never worked harder in my life." City political figures from the old Tammany crowd may have thought that JDR, Jr. would take the easy way and let the investigations evaporate without resolution. Because of his leadership the investigations actually took almost twice as long as originally planned. Indictments were handed down to the courts, who in fact didn't really want them. "Johnny Rock," as he had been called at college, was a tenacious and methodical worker for the truth. Because of this work the press once again hailed him, and his family name was in some measure redeemed.⁴⁴



Facade of Kykuit III. Elevation designed by W.W. Bosworth. Sculpture executed by F.M.L. Tonetti and Mary Lawrence Tonetti. HABS drawing by Jorge Sein.

Rebuilding

When the Delano and Aldrich plans for the renovations were almost ready they were sent out for estimates before bids. This time, instead of giving the contract to a family friend, a list of likely contractors was selected. On April 27, 1911, the bids came in:

Central Building Company	\$111,582.00
Extra for copper roof	\$1,471.00
Chas. T. Wills, Inc.	\$116,056.00
Extra for copper roof	\$1,475.00
Hedden Construction Co.	\$116,994.00
Extra for copper roof	not given
Thompson-Starrett Co.	\$126,655.00
Extra for copper roof	not given

Though the Thompson-Starrett Company was asked to make a proposal it was unlikely that it would be asked actually to do the work. The next day, April 28, Charles T. Wills, Inc. was asked to make a final bid. They returned a total proposal of \$113,360.00. JDR, Jr. answered the same day with the following:

On my father's behalf I accept your proposition understanding . . . it will include . . . copper snow guards suitable for copper roof specified; understanding that the changes in the specifications made since your estimate was submitted . . . are to be regarded as though made prior to the presentation of your bid instead of subsequently.⁴⁵

Wills agreed with the conditions; obviously, he needed and wanted the work. But JDR, Jr. and his father wanted Wills just as much.

Charles Thomas Wills (1851-1915) was a New York City builder who had come up from the ranks of the labor force to great respect and success in the construction contracting business. As New York City became a vertical hub of world business, the high tide moved Wills up with it. Known by many prominent architects, Wills worked to the plans of Ernest Flagg, George B. Post, McKim, Mead and White, and numerous others. In his day, if a builder was fair, honest, and expert at commercial work for an important business concern, the owner and architect might also ask him to build a city residence. This is exactly what Wills had done. He had come to notice for working both ways. If he did a worthy job of building an important city house, then it was only logical that the architect and client would ask him to build a planned commercial project. C.T. Wills built the Singer Building, the New York Stock Exchange, the University Club, and many other urban landmarks in the financial district of New York City. At the same time he built homes in the fashionable neighborhoods for J.P. Morgan, Andrew Carnegie, H.H. Flagler, and E.S. Harkness.⁴⁶ Though JDR, Jr. told his father that Morgan and Carnegie "speak well of him," the last two named were close associates with

Rockefeller in the old days at Standard Oil. JDR needed no better recommendation than that his friends were satisfied with Wills' work. C.T. Wills, Inc. was hired, the work to commence immediately.

JDR, Jr., again in charge of construction management at Pocantico, started by running interference for the architects and the builder by going directly to the American Bridge Company (in which the Rockefellers had an interest) and expedited the structural steel deliveries. Past experience had prepared him to beware of steel supply problems. The steel shop representative was to come to the site to verify the sizes and lengths of beams, channels, and angles. American Bridge had objected to this aspect of their responsibility; JDR, Jr. had to pull rank, and with great success.⁴⁷

The times had changed somewhat from the period of the first construction of the house. By the summer of 1911 the public condemnation and the press' scorn of JDR had quieted down somewhat. After the great Standard Oil Trust had been broken, and the public learned of the equally great Rockefeller philanthropy, magazine articles began to appear in his defense and even praise. Better health had returned to JDR, and he found more time to be at the Kykuit project site to oversee the work. It was, after all, his money and his house. For JDR, Jr. this meant possible field changes that would upset the guaranteed price contract. He had to step aside and let his father take on some of the management and responsibility. A new idea struck JDR. He began to gather data and sort out a way to have an underground passage from the Coach Barn to the sub-basement of the house. As long as it didn't have to do with pipes and wires, foundations and beams, and had to do more with moving earth, then JDR was in his own element.

On June 20, 1911, JDR was at his 26 Broadway office, cogitating. This was a period of new and inventive ideas for JDR. He began to show more interest and take more pleasure in new design ideas at Pocantico. He wrote to his son about a new "aqueduct" or "subway" from the Coach Barn to gain access to the housekeeper's area in the sub-basement of the house. There were several reasons for the idea, but the most immediate was that deliveries by provisioners were made in the north side service court at the basement door, on grade. From 1909, the noise of horses, wagons, motor trucks, and delivery men had upset the early morning sleep of the senior Rockefellers; their rooms overlooked this area. When coal was delivered, the din was very disturbing. Mr. Hargreave, the housekeeper's husband, had already discussed the underground access idea with JDR. In answer to his father's suggestions, JDR, Jr. first mentioned that Abby's father was doing something like this, building a tunnel access to his house at Warwick, Rhode Island. He also mentioned that Bosworth had designed the Senator's house improvements.

However, JDR, Jr. said that at Pocantico he couldn't imagine how it could be done, "... there is no place for an opening nor any way in which it could approach the house."⁴⁸ That was all it took to challenge his father. JDR knew his apples when it came to excavation, earth moving, grading, and the like. He would make sure that everyone would notice his expertise. A special consultant, D.E. Howatt, was brought from Cleveland and the work of design started over the July 4, 1911, holiday. JDR, himself, in shirt-sleeves, led the survey party of Howatt and Bosworth to lay out new grades. JDR didn't want a lot of fancy and expensive plans—he wanted action.

The service tunnel was actually built in an open cut that was covered by structure. It leads to an underground room or court paved with small wooden blocks (edge grain up) to keep the wheel noise down. In the center of the underground service court are two very large, round reinforced concrete columns. The columns support a roof of concrete upon which was built the large Stone Boat fountain. The white marble ship was designed by Bosworth in the shape of an ancient Roman trireme (a 1st-century fighting galley). It stands in the housekeeper's garden surrounded by a gravel path, but it was meant to be seen and appreciated from the northeast porch arcade that overlooks the area. Another of Bosworth's special effects was the underwater lighting in the Stone Boat. Stem-mounted bronze lily pads with glass lotus blossoms, all made by Tiffany Studios, once floated on the luminous water in the Stone Boat. That was the final plan, but when the original ideas were discussed JDR, sharing his son's thrill of special effects, wanted to have the floor of the housekeeper's garden (roof of the service tunnel room) made entirely of glass, and lighted from below. The bottom of the Stone Boat was conceived of as part of this scheme and would have also been built entirely of glass. However, JDR, Jr., for once being more practical than his father, rejected the idea as not only structurally impractical, but extremely expensive. Reinforced concrete was used, but there are several vestigial glass dot panels along the edge of the garden floor next to the housekeeper's door.

The excavation and construction work on the service tunnel went dreadfully slowly for many months. JDR had given the project to D.E. Howatt as a separate contract, but reserved the right to direct the work personally when he was on the site and in the mood. This had frustrated efficiency, confused both Howatt and his client, and eliminated any hope of cost control. Finally, JDR, Jr. had to take charge and make strides to have the tunnel completed.

Bosworth found every opportunity to build distinct outdoor rooms defined by every substance and device at his command. JDR may have complained to his son about the high

costs of these garden delights, but he allowed the designer to continue to enhance the gardens for almost ten years. In the meantime, Bosworth received many other important commissions from “society” clients because of his friendship with JDR, Jr. As the reconstruction of Kykuit III was progressing in mid-summer, 1911, JDR, Jr. asked Bosworth to make recommendations of other architects who might be asked to design a new city house for his young and growing family: JDR, Jr. and Abby had already had little Abby (1903), JDR 3rd (1906), Nelson A. (1908), and Laurance S. (1910). They intended to have more children and were quickly running out of space in their West 54th Street house in Manhattan. The junior Rockefellers bought the property next door to their home, at No. 10 West 54th, in order to build a larger place. At JDR, Jr.’s request, Bosworth looked into the fee structure of Charles A. Platt, McKim, Mead and White, and Trowbridge and Livingston. Not surprisingly, after a review of his ideas and the possible costs, JDR, Jr. hired Bosworth to do the design. The new city house planning work was slowly and deliberately considered until Abby’s next pregnancy; Winthrop was born in 1912, followed by David, in 1915. Bosworth’s new commission was official on August 7, 1911. The cement between Bosworth and JDR, Jr. was strengthened again by another personal project.⁴⁹

These distractions did not slow the major work of C.T. Wills. The summer of 1911 saw his men making progress, after a fashion, by decapitating Kykuit II. Also in August JDR, Jr. wrote to his father about the acquisition of an important fountain. It was one of Stanford White’s personal pieces, liquidated along with most of his estate after his 1906 murder. The wall fountain was then owned by a friend of Bosworth’s, Alexander B. Trowbridge, of the architectural firm of Trowbridge and Livingston. JDR considered the asking price (\$1,200.00) too steep. But JDR, Jr. wanted Bosworth to pursue Trowbridge and get the best price he could. The fountain was intended to complement the outer wall changes planned for the extension of the forecourt in front of Kykuit III. The asking price for the fountain was nothing compared to the costs of moving and setting it, and providing the pumping and piping apparatus. Again, JDR was tolerant; the desired object was acquired.

The builder was also taking on the various sub-contractors required to execute the trades. From May 11th to September 6th of 1911, Wills had signed with 24 of them. Over \$42,000 just in interior work and another \$64,000 in masonry work was sub-contracted. This left precious little for Wills’ work, given the guaranteed price (\$113,360.00) they had agreed to at the start. What remained for the general contractor was a paltry \$7,000 to complete his work. Fortunately for Wills, changes and revisions, just as had been the case from 1906 to 1909 with Thompson-Starrett, were to help

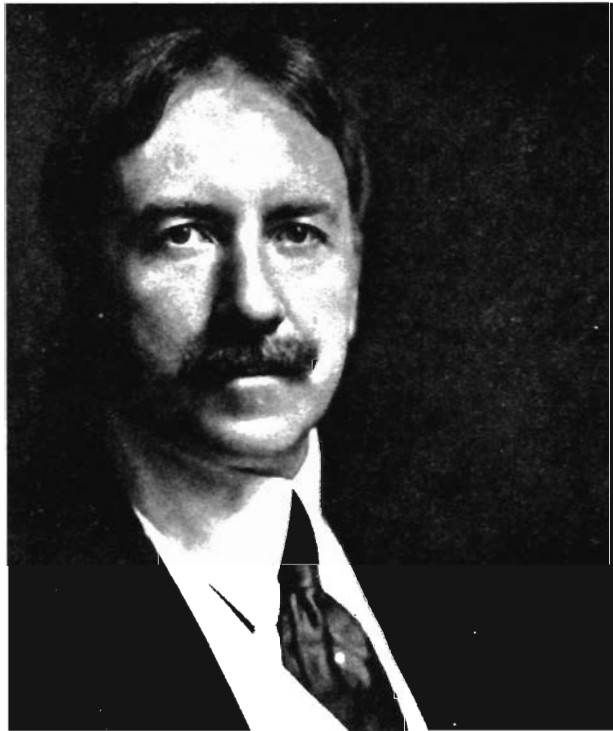
adjust the agreement in Wills' favor. But Wills had also promised JDR, Jr. that he could keep the house safe and dry while opening the top of it. He didn't count on the fierce storms that typically rumble over the Tappan Zee in late summer. Gone with the wind were the tarpaulin covers and falsework used for weather protection. The second and first floors were damaged, and doors, hardwood floors, and plaster had to be replaced or refinished at additional cost.

By the end of September, 1911, the Stanford White fountain installation work was commissioned at \$9,000. This did not include the cost of the fountain itself. And it was only one small resolution among many required to complete the forecourt. By mid-October, great strides had been made on the house construction. However, during the chilly fall weather, streams of condensation collected and flowed down the new plaster walls in the unheated house, causing more wet damage. The estate labor foreman who found the situation immediately contacted the Rockefeller family business office at 26 Broadway; he asked to be allowed to buy or rent enough kerosene heaters to help dry out the house.⁵⁰ At the same time, C.T. Wills, Inc. was also working in the city for JDR, Jr. The contractor had been hired on a separate account to refurbish 9 West 53rd Street, the house of JDR, Jr.'s favorite sister, Alta, and her husband, E. Parmalee Prentice. Wills also worked on 8 West 54th and the new house at 10 West 54th Street, JDR, Jr.'s huge eight story city house.

In December, JDR, Jr. wrote to D.E. Howatt, who had been originally brought in by JDR to build the service tunnel, and asked him also to excavate a deeper elevator pit in the sub-basement of the house. The agreement mentioned "no blasting." The plan was to increase the elevator carrying capacity with a second baggage car suspended from the bottom of the elevator passenger car. Deepening the pit was the only way to accommodate the new car. The basement and sub-basement of the house had been excavated from almost solid granite rock. By his own recommendation, the sub-contractor was inrent on using the ancient method of "plug-and-feather" to excavate the deep elevator pit. Dry wooden plugs or wedges had to be driven into prepared holes in the rock. Soaked with warm water, these plugs slowly expanded and forced the rock to crack. Given the confines of the pit, this method was impractical. It soon became obvious to Howatt that the rock was more unyielding than he had thought. Later, when JDR, Jr. visited the sire for one of his typical inspections he found that a workman had been *blasting* in the pit—a fatal mistake. JDR, Jr. knew that this offending sub-contractor was on very friendly terms with his father, but he was quite rightly concerned for the structural integrity of the whole house. JDR, Jr. wrote to his father:

For the slight economy which the blasting may effect, the immense risk of cracking the waterproofing, loosening the ceilings, jarring the foundations of the house, any one of which things might be ten or twenty times more costly than the savings, seems to me to be absolutely unjustifiable.

He closed his report by offering his father the burden of responsibility, writing: "Unless you so direct, no further blasting will be done. It seems to me work like this Mr. Munn (an estate foreman) should have under his eye."⁵¹ D.E. Howatt, the sub-contractor, was relieved from the work in the elevator pit and on the tunnel—he was fired. This was a great disappointment to JDR.



William Welles Bosworth (1869-1966), architect and landscape designer.
Photo (c. 1907) courtesy of Avery Library.

Any betrayal by a "friend" was cause for serious soul-searching and upsetment. JDR had believed in Howatt. On account of this miscreant hired man JDR stood embarrassed in front of the other contractors, his estate manager, the architects, and worst of all, his son. It took some time for JDR to act. After going over Bosworth's new and more ambi-

tious house elevations and the plans for the extension of the forecourt, he was away in the South for philanthropic planning and to get some rest. When he returned to the Pocantico site, in March of 1912, he issued new orders. On March 22, 1912, JDR, Jr. wrote back to his father:

Do I understand from your letter of March 21st that you wish to have each step of the work presented to you for approval, or that you simply wish to have anything which has not already been agreed upon taken up with you? I assume the latter.⁵²

As JDR saw it, almost everything he had initiated at Pocantico had come to some kind of grief or disappointment, or else it had become tremendously expensive. He wanted to clamp down and exercise more control. JDR, Jr. knew from past experience that this would be folly. He had to work carefully against his father's frustrations to actually save him more aggravation. But the work slowed down, papers piled up on JDR's desk; through his caution and misgivings he had almost put the project into a stall.

Gardens of Delight

Nothing seemed to stop Bosworth; he continued to design the details of the main facade of the house, and to plan the new forecourt, while he was also completing the work on JDR, Jr.'s new city house. To break the ice at Pocantico, Bosworth went directly to JDR with his ideas and explanations. He had also built a small model of the extended forecourt to show his clients. But JDR was impatient with the architect. He could see very well without a model what the intention and practical consequences were, and he wrote to Bosworth:

. . . we can secure all the advantages . . . with schemes I can readily point out and which I hope will be entirely satisfactory.

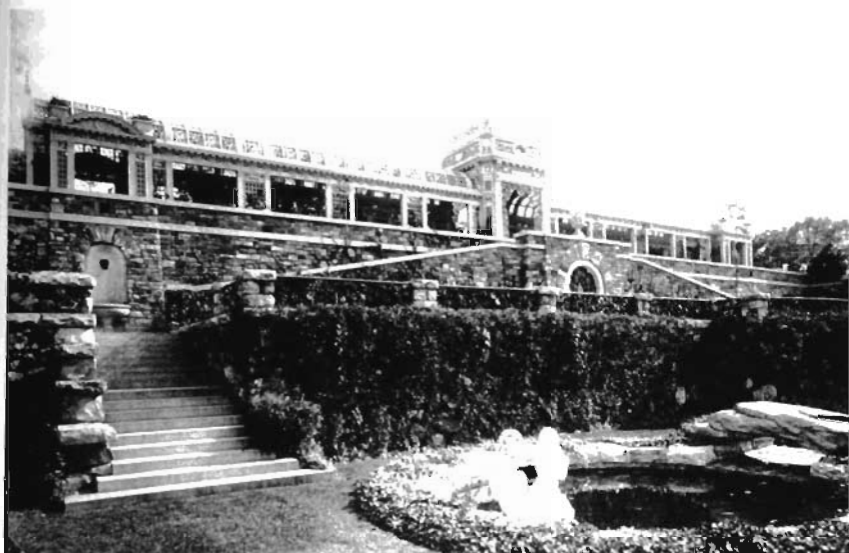
He was referring to his own plan to use a perspective trick to splay the forecourt drive and thereby give a sense of depth to the area without having to extend it toward the east. JDR knew just enough to be dangerous to Bosworth's well-done scheme. To back up his designs and convince his client of the validity of his plans Bosworth brought in the well-regarded Charles A. Platt, who agreed with the proposed extension plan. This may have paved the way for JDR's approval of the extension, but the practical methods of doing the work were at issue. Again, the old amateur landscaper became too deeply involved in the how-to methods. He expected to be able to enjoy teaching his architect a few things about practical factors and about economy.

In early April of 1912, JDR asked his estate man, Mr. Munn, to estimate the amount of earth he thought was required to be moved and compacted in order to extend the forecourt. JDR insisted that there were enough fill, labor, and machines available on the estate that he wouldn't have to hire outside contractors and use more sophisticated engineering methods than he could find at home. All this was reported to JDR, Jr., who wrote to his father on April 12, 1912, to intercede for Bosworth. The practical JDR, Jr. knew that the earth fill method would compress and possibly slide away from the embankment at the end of the old gateway to the forecourt. A structural method, realistically engineered and built of concrete and masonry, was needed. Even after JDR directed the initiation of the work of hauling the new earth fill, JDR, Jr. convinced his father to reconsider. Here, JDR's behavior was like that of Dr. Samuel Johnson, as reported by Boswell: "I dogmatise and am contradicted, and in this conflict of opinion and sentiment I find delight."⁵³

With a promise to his father of more frugality and expedition, JDR, Jr. once again gained control of the project. His father was to be kept informed and asked for permission to commit *any extra expenditures*. What was built to extend the forecourt was a series of masonry and reinforced concrete coffered, empty rooms below grade, with walls that support a deck for the gently sloping lawn and carriageway in front of the house. The termination of this extension was a monumental stone headwall. From the east lawn, below the open end of the forecourt, the headwall focus is a niche containing a large white marble sculpture, in deep relief, of a reclining Adam, Eve emerging from his side or ribs. Bosworth had made arrangements with JDR, Jr. to have George Grey Barnard execute the Adam and Eve. At the base of this concave niche is a half-oval thrust fountain basin of fine pink granite. Around the basin, on the floor of the east lawn is a remarkable paved area made of rough, colored marble cobbles laid out in radiating segments. Each of the seven segments depicts one of the signs of the eastern zodiac. Stone stairs in switchback style, with limestone balustrades, flank the headwall niche and the fan-shaped zodiac. The monumental stairs, made of three kinds of stone, allow access from the forecourt above to the east lawn below. At the stair turn landings there are small secret gardens, to the north and south, that neither belong to the forecourt nor to the east lawn; they are an in-between world. In the boxwood garden on the south landing is Frederick G.R. Roth's *Sleeping Ariadne*, while on the north stand *Cupid and Psyche*, after Augustin Pajou. (The sculpture pieces have been moved around the Kykuit gardens over the last 75 years. Their 1993 placement is reported here.)

Bosworth's virtuosity had not yet been exhausted, nor even fully tapped. JDR, Jr. spent some time in the summer of 1912 explaining to his father about Bosworth's plans to cap

the headwall, to terminate and focus the forecourt, and to counter the new house facade with a substantial work of fountain sculpture. Other estate problems interdicted for a time; there had been trouble with robbers and extortionists who preyed upon the mostly Italian estate laborers. There was intimidation and violence at Pocantico and in Tarrytown. The evil “Black Hand” organization even threatened the Rockefeller family in the summer of 1912. Significant numbers of frightened laborers resigned or simply disappeared. The newspapers made much of it while the Rockefellers quietly dealt with the problem through special detective agents.⁵⁴ These troubles finally cleared away, it was not until January 16, 1913, that JDR, his son and Bosworth had lunch together to discuss the details of the forecourt fountain idea.



Bosworth's Terrace Arbor in the south garden of Kykuit. F.M.L. Tonetti sculpted the cyprus figures from the LaFontain fables. It was demolished in 1936. Courtesy Rockefeller Archive Center.

JDR, Jr. had sent photos of “La Fontana Dell’Oceano” to his father. The pictures may have been copies of the ones published by Edith Wharton and Maxfield Parish in their 1905 book, *Italian Villas and their Gardens*. Bosworth had selected this grand, mid-16th-century, work of art that had been originally sculpted by Giam (Giovani) da Bologna and placed in the Boboli gardens of the Pitti Palace, in Renaissance Florence. The idea took hold with JDR, Jr.’s help. When asked how much it would cost, JDR, Jr. brushed it off as if it would be an easy-to-afford \$50,000.00. It actually took the planning and labor of many companies and individuals and cost much more. Copy sculptors worked from the original fountain’s four figures in Italy, using white Carrara marble. The great

Stonington granite basin, weighing over 60 tons when finished and empty of water, and the central granite support column, weighing over 15 tons, had to be quarried, cut, and prefinished on Gut Island, Maine. It took until the late spring of 1914 for the parts and pieces to be towed down the coast and barged up the Hudson River to Tarrytown. Then, by anchored steam winches, the heavy crates and sledges were dragged up the hills to Pocantico and erected as they stood. The real cost of all materials and labor was four times the estimate. But the delight and satisfaction in the final product was rewarding for the Rockefellers, and for Bosworth.⁵⁵

Behind the new and higher facades of the house on Kykuit Hill the work of finishing and furnishing, painting and decorating continued. But there were added touches that JDR had introduced into the design. To gain more interior light, especially in the servants' quarters on the top (fourth) floor, skylights and vents were added. Some skylights were for linen storage closets, while others pierced the servants' floor to bring light into the guest room halls on the third floor. JDR's thoughtful modifications necessarily slowed the work but improved the plan and habitability of the house.

On June 25, 1913, estate foreman Frank Briggs sent out a letter to Tarrytown tradesmen and provisioners. They were told to use the service tunnel, not the ground level housekeeper's door, to make deliveries. This was the nearest equivalent to a formal announcement that the house was finished and that the senior Rockefellers had taken occupancy. Actually they had left for the summer to be at Forest Hill. But their staff had opened the house to operations. What remained to be completed was the ornamentation of the front facade. Tiffany Studios manufactured the decorative bronze marquee at the portecochère and the florid balconies at the third floor windows. The limestone sculpture in the main gable and the facade relief panels were carved by Francois and Mary Tonetti, close friends of Bosworth.

John D. and Laura S. Rockefeller were both seventy-four in 1913. The last payment for the work was not made to C.T. Wills, Inc. until December 8, 1913. It had taken seven years of almost continuous construction and renovations finally to call their Pocantico house complete. Their visions of Kykuit had shifted and changed from 1893, when they bought the property. Their visions were obscured by the arson of the old barn in 1895, clouded again by the accidental fire in 1902 that destroyed the old Parsons house (Kykuit I) that they loved so much. Their illusions of "noble architecture" on the hill were unfulfilled in 1909 with Kykuit II. Finally they came to rest in 1913 in the great house we know as Kykuit III.

Laura Spelman Rockefeller was too old and weak from long respiratory illnesses really to enjoy her house. The Mistress of Kykuit died there on March 12, 1915, only 21 months after moving back into the house.

Fire III

Smoke from nearby curled around Kykuit once again after the house was almost complete. On July 1st, 1913, JDR, Jr. sent a telegram from Seal Harbor, Maine, to his father, who was spending a traditional summer at Forest Hill with Laura. There had been another fire at Pocantico on the previous night. The stable wing of the Coach Barn had burned through, damaging the entire building. More telegrams were traded that day between Maine and Ohio. JDR recommended that Duncan Candler be hired as architect for the restoration.⁵⁶ But JDR, Jr. wanted Bosworth to do the work. Rather than allow a competition (his father's idea), JDR, Jr. immediately contacted his friend Bosworth, and told him to get on the job with all haste. With "the game's afoot" attitude and in the best tradition of his profession, Bosworth lost no time in visiting the scene of the fire. He had to think for his absent client and brought along George Wills, C.T. Wills' son, and he also brought along a structural engineer. They all met with the estate manager, Briggs, and the labor foreman, Munn. In eight to ten days, Bosworth sent off his first drawings to JDR, Jr. for review. They also exchanged written programs, passing in the mail, that were in general agreement. On July 11th, JDR, Jr. wrote to his father informing him, not asking him, that Bosworth *would* proceed with the complete rehabilitation (restructuring) of the Coach Barn. This finally put a halt to JDR's idea of having Charles Platt and/or Duncan Candler do designs on speculation, against which he would like to have had Bosworth's plans compared. The die was already cast. The Coach Barn had been JDR, Jr.'s idea from the very start in 1900. The 1907 renovations were his ideas as well. And, after all the experiences he had been through with the organization and management of the construction projects at Pocantico, he felt he would rather work with Bosworth than anyone else.⁵⁷

What was about to happen to York and Sawyer's proud schloss of a Rhine stronghold was to transmogrify their Coach Barn. JDR, Jr. was slightly concerned when he saw Bosworth's elevations. It was a building he didn't know. But Bosworth sang his old song of aesthetic ecstasy to convince JDR, Jr. of the validity of his architectural plans, elevations and sections. W. Welles Bosworth was not about to slavishly restore a building he didn't really like. The original style of the Coach Barn was not what Bosworth would call good architecture. Besides, he had the opportunity to make the whole building his

own. Bosworth ultimately designed the facades of the Kykuit III; he had designed all of the gardens around it, and the Orangerie. And now he could call the bulk of the estate's architecture his work by impressing his stamp on the Coach Barn.

Between the Rockefeller men it was decided that the construction work should be done by estate labor and only whatever small outside trades as were necessary. No general contractor was hired, but the Rockefellers had to pay out more than \$200,000.00 to sixty-one contractors and Bosworth's fees.⁵⁸ It took until September of 1914 to call the building finished. Even then, Bosworth was second-guessing himself and redesigning the front facade of the Coach Barn. He wanted to build a new bell tower with imported chimes that would play different tunes and toll out the hours loudly enough to be heard in the Kykuit house. After entertaining the campanile ideas and reviewing the drawings, JDR insisted that cost estimates be worked up. The problems with Bosworth's design were structural in nature, and the costs associated spelled doom for his scheme. The campanile was not built.

Today, the exterior architecture of the Coach Barn appears almost industrial, no longer aspiring and vertically reaching as the original 1902 photos show. Bosworth intended his reconstruction of the building to be "calm" and "Italian" in character—certainly not German Gothic as it had been. He said that he didn't like "those big arches," and the tall dormered roof; it was all too bold for him. Within, the building's principal spaces, the garage and stalls areas, are grand and functional. One of the most important aspects of Bosworth's Coach Barn plan is the top floor, under the low hip roof. Always short of adequate estate staff housing, JDR, Jr. wanted a larger and more efficient apartment scheme. What Bosworth designed was a series of seven tenement-style, family house-keeping units, and a group of bachelor's rooms, all served by an elevator. Bosworth eliminated the heavy columns and deep beams in the second level (stable wing and garage wing first floor). The important structural aspects of the rebuilt Coach Barn are concealed in the attic and third level (second floor) walls and floors. Remarkably, the apartment floor deck structure is suspended from the roof truss system by iron bars that are built into room partitions. The documents indicate that this inventive structural method is not really Bosworth's design, though the plan configuration is. It was actually Post and McCord Company, engineers and suppliers of structural steel, who designed the concealed roof/floor support system.⁵⁹

After the Coach Barn reconstruction was complete there was less and less to do at Pocantico for the architects and builders. The work of assembling the estate and acquiring more adjacent land continued through the 1920s, until it was some 6,000 acres

large. Since then, it has been only through a continuous process of loving care and great maintenance that this National Historic Landmark site has been kept in a delightful state of preservation by the Rockefeller family, the descendants of the two men whose visions it represents.

Final Analysis

Rockefeller & Son, Designers & Builders

The historic landscape at Pocantico, though it represents Bosworth's consummate design talent, was first conceived, then adjusted, and finally approved by the amateur landscape architect John D. Rockefeller. The historic architecture, though the buildings represent the work of York and Sawyer, Delano and Aldrich, and Bosworth, was, likewise, co-authored by architect-manqué John D. Rockefeller, Jr. An understanding, appreciation, and love of the land and nature was joined with a refined sense of elegant and permanent structures at Pocantico. Seen in context, their work on and around Kykuit Hill represents only a small but very significant product of a famous father and son partnership.

Afterword

This article is presented in centennial commemoration of the 1893 founding of the estate at Pocantico Hills. The central part of the private park (86 acres) was given to the National Trust for Historic Preservation in a bequest by Nelson A. Rockefeller (1908-1979). In preparation for the centennial my research and recording work started in September of 1991 as a commission to measure the buildings and gardens on and around Kykuit Hill. But the real task was also to take some measure of the men who commissioned the work, the men who designed the buildings and gardens, and the contractors who came to build the principal buildings at Pocantico Hill.

The estate is still what it was envisioned to be, a private Rockefeller family compound. The visions of Kykuit were achieved by John D. Rockefeller as they were built by his son, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. They worked together for almost 24 years (1893 to 1917) to create a complete garden of earthly delights, a Utopia at Pocantico that now belongs to the people. After an extensive program of restoration, renovation, and conservation is complete, the central part of the estate will be opened to the public for small guided tours. We have all thus received from the Rockefellers an inheritance of "noble land."

Credits

The historic site survey and this excerpt from my historic structures report was made possible only through the efforts and support of many others. I would therefore like to extend my gratitude to the director and archivists at the Rockefeller Archive Center, the president and staff of Greenrock Corporation, the leadership of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Inc., the curators at Kykuit House, the architects at Herbert S. Newman and Partners, the librarian and historian of the Town of Hunter, the research assistants at Columbia's Avery Library, and to friends, old and new, who freely gave their encouragement and suggestions.

This story of Pocantico Hills is not complete, of course, but it would be unfair to the memory of the talents of the professional builders and designers if there were not some mention of what became of the men who helped realize the visions of Kykuit:

The Builders of Kykuit

Thompson-Starrett Company broke up in 1913. Henry Soffe Thompson (1874-1947), an engineer, had taken a career interest in New York City's utility operations. He was appointed in 1907 as part-time Superintendent of Buildings by Mayor Seth Low. Mayor William J. Gaynor later made him full-time Commissioner of Water, Gas, and Electricity. Thompson owned the Hotel Marie Antoinette; he was a director of the Reinforced Concrete Construction Company; he became director and vice president of the Globe and Rutgers Fire Insurance Company, and eventually he was a director of Remington Rand Corporation.⁶⁰

William Aiken Starrett (1877-1932), an architect, left Thompson to join his brother, Winegold, in the firm of Van Vleck and Starrett. They won the commission to design and build the modernistic Lord and Taylor Building in 1914. In 1918 W.A. Starrett became vice president of the George A. Fuller Company, and in 1921 he joined with his brothers to form Starrett Brothers and Eken, Inc. In World War I Starrett gained the rank of Colonel. An innovator in high-rise structural steel buildings, Starrett published articles about modern engineering and construction methods. From 1919 to 1921 he built several seismic resistant steel framed structures in Japan. His construction corporation was commissioned to build the Empire State Building. As that building was being completed he published his book, *Skyscrapers and the Men Who Built Them*. Henry S. Thompson and William A. Starrett were very young men when they took the contract

to build Kykuit. They still had the most important and productive parts of their careers before them.⁶¹

William Baumgarten (1846-1906), the owner of the company by the same name that installed the Ogden Codman interiors of Kykuit II and Kykuit III, was a notable New Yorker. He started his career in New York in 1861 with Herter Brothers and Company. In 1881 he opened his own furniture manufactory and interior decoration firm, and in 1893 he brought four French weavers to New York and introduced Gobelin tapestry making to the United States. Baumgarten gained a reputation for decorating the homes of many important New Yorkers, including W.H. Vanderbilt, J.P. Morgan, and Josiah M. Fiske. Baumgarten died before the work on the Kykuit interiors began. His most important and last client before his death in 1906 was William A. Rockefeller.⁶²

Charles Thomas Wills (1851-1915) started his working career as a construction helper in 1868. He worked himself up through the ranks of labor to own an important construction company. For many years he kept his business ad on the inside front jacket of *Architectural Record* magazine. Wills was a member of the New York Chamber of Commerce. He had a seat on the Board of Trade and Transportation, and another seat on the Mechanics' and Traders' Exchange. His contracting company was in direct competition with other high-rise builders in New York City. He was a versatile builder and managed to have contracts for major commercial buildings while at the same time building important homes. Wills died only nine months after completing the reconstruction of John D. Rockefeller's house at Pocantico Hills.⁶³

The Landscape Architects

Warren H. Manning (1860-1938) had spent eight years with Olmsted's firm before he came to Pocantico Hills. After Olmsted, his mentor, became ill, never to recover, Manning left to take on personal commissions when he was thirty-six years old. In 1897 Manning received his first real "society" commission when Effie (Theodate) Pope asked him to design her parents' place, Hill-Stead, in Farmington, Connecticut. He later designed public parks in Duluth and Minneapolis. In 1901 Manning worked with W. Welles Bosworth and many other designers on the fairgrounds at the Pan-American Exposition at Buffalo, New York. From his headquarters office in Cambridge, Manning worked on conservation plans for Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks. He planned campus designs for Cornell, Johns Hopkins, Western Reserve, Princeton, Massachusetts State, and North Carolina State Universities. Manning helped found ASLA (American

Society of Landscape Architects) and worked for the separate recognition of his profession with other landscape designers, including Beatrix Jones Ferrand, Edith (Newbold Jones) Wharton's cousin. His best surviving work is the 1911 Seiberling estate, Stan Hywet, in Akron, Ohio.⁶⁴

William Welles Bosworth (1869-1966) spent 10 years at Pocantico Hills, where he designed the Kykuit gardens. It was his longest and most productive single commission in the United States. Before that he had been given a gold medal for his design work at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York, in 1901. He also designed the Magdalen Society building in Manhattan in 1908; Samuel Untermyer's 1912-1915 estate, Greystone, Yonkers, New York; the 1912 Major L'Enfant Memorial, Arlington, Virginia; the 1913 MIT buildings and campus plan; the 1917 American Telegraph Building in Manhattan; the 1919 Scarborough-on-Hudson School; the 1920 Illinois Central Railroad Station, Chicago; the 1922 Western Union Telegraph Building, 40 Broad Street, New York City; and many other projects. Bosworth published two books about Pocantico, *The Gardens of Kykuit* in 1919, and *The Altoviti Venus* in 1921. After 1922 Bosworth traveled the world, worked on the Cairo Museum for several years, settled in France, married at age fifty-seven, and had four children. In France he became General Secretary of La Commite Franco-Americain pour la Restauration des Monuments. Bosworth became the guiding force in the restorations of Chateaux Versailles, Fontainebleau, and Chateaubriand. He was restoration architect for Rheims Cathedral, completed just before the German occupation as World War II began. He was decorated by the French government with the Cross of Commander, Order of Arts and Letters, Legion of Honor. Except for the period of Nazi occupation, he remained in France until his death at 98, in 1966.⁶⁵

The Coach Barn Architects

Edward Palmer York (1865-1928) and **Philip Sawyer** (1868-1949) left the firm of McKim, Mead and White in 1897 and began their partnership career with a string of five Rockefeller commissions: Vassar College, a 30-year program (1897-1928) of planning and buildings at Poughkeepsie, New York; the 1898 Armitage Chapel; the two-year program (1900-1902) on the West Side Settlement House; the 1902 Coach Barn at Pocantico Hills; and the 1904 Hospital and Nurse's Residence at Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, in Manhattan. The firm was a great success; they entered and won many competitions including the design of Children's Village at Dobbs Ferry, near Hastings-on-Hudson. York and Sawyer went on to design many other major buildings,

including hospitals, banks, college buildings, government office buildings, churches, and industrial structures (Sawyer was also a civil engineer). One of their most impressive projects was the Federal Triangle complex in Washington, D.C.⁶⁶

The Kykuit Architects

A great deal of scholarship exists with regard to the better-known architects who came to Pocantico Hills. However, out of my own curiosity and perhaps a sense of concern for the one architect who lost his opportunity there, and the fact that no one has thus far produced a biography of this man, I would like to include the following:

Dunham A. Wheeler (1861-1938) was born near Jamaica, Long Island at "Nestledown," the Wheeler family's 1854 country home. He grew up in Brooklyn, the youngest child of the well-known arts and crafts designer Candace Thurber Wheeler (1827-1923), who co-founded Associated Artists in New York with L.C. Tiffany, Eastman Johnson, and others. Dunham Wheeler traveled through Europe with his family many times from the age of five; he first attended school in Dresden. Wheeler's mother became intellectually alert in her mid-thirties and surrounded herself with artists and writers at her Brooklyn and Long Island homes. Her son, Dunham, was exposed from youth to many important cultural influences and was apprenticed to James P. VanDyyn.

In 1888 Wheeler became a member of the Architectural League of New York and was listed in practice in 1894 as treasurer of Associated Artists at 115 E. 23rd St. Wheeler advertised his mother's firm's specialty as "private residences, considerable interior work." One of their most impressive commissions was the interior rehabilitation in 1881 for the 1874 Hartford home of Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain). Candace Wheeler retired in 1900 and turned over ownership and management of Associated Artists to Dunham. His sister, Dora Wheeler Keith (1856-1940), went on to become a well-known portrait painter who shared offices with him for many years.

Wheeler designed at least two modest Long Island estates: H.B. Anderson's Boulders in 1895, and R.V. Sewell's Fleetwood in 1907. At Onteora Park, near the towns of Hunter and Tannersville in the Catskills, Wheeler designed some of the original houses for the Park development company headed by his mother and uncle. Onteora was an artists' summer colony in the mountains. He was just 22 in 1883 when he designed Pennyroyal, a cottage for his sister, Dora. He later designed a string of other Onteora buildings, including the 1888 Bear and Fox Inn; Henry L. Stimson's 1889 cottage, Tamarack; Miss

Jean Keith's 1890 cottage, Caraway (Careaway); the 1891 cottage of Mrs. George H. Bend, Skyhigh; the 1892 Onteora Lodge; and the large Fir Tower cottage (undated) and several others.

Wheeler worked in the Shingle Style for most of his clients' mountain houses. For his formal country homes he found the Gothic half-timbered, brick-nogged, Jacobean and Queen Anne Style more suitable—imposing, but durable and dignified. His 1902-1904 rehabilitation work for John D. Rockefeller began with an existing gambrel clubhouse on the old Lakewood Country Club grounds. Wheeler added dormers, surrounding sunporches, a large, almost classical, port-cochère, and interior alterations including furniture and decorations. The members of the Lakewood Golf Club hired Wheeler to design their new clubhouse at about the same time the Rockefeller renovations started.

John D. Rockefeller's Pocantico Hills house, near North Tarrytown, N.Y., burned in 1902, while Wheeler was providing professional services for him at Lakewood. Rockefeller asked Wheeler to give him sketch-designs of a proposed new house on Kykuit Hill at Pocantico. In 1903 the two men visited the New York site together and laid out the building relating to sun angles and compass points. Wheeler worked with a named associate, Birdsall Jackson, in 1903-1904 for John D. Rockefeller without benefit of a true contract with the retired oil magnate. Though he produced working drawings by 1904, he was not honored with the actual design commission for the house on Kykuit Hill. The new firm of Delano and Aldrich was favored with that contract after protracted deliberations between John D. Rockefeller and his son. Wheeler's firm was succeeded in 1917 by Whittridge and Barrows.

Dunham A. Wheeler died at his home in Port Washington, Long Island on March 3, 1938, survived by his daughter, Mrs. George Riggs. He was an uncle of Colonel Henry L. Stimson.⁶⁷

William Adams Delano (1874-1960) and **Chester Holmes Aldrich** (1871-1940) started their partnership career in 1903 with two important commissions: the Kykuit House design for John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and the Walters Art Gallery (William Thompson Walters [1820-1894]) in Baltimore. But as soon as they had these commissions under design they began to attract many other "society" clients. Some of their many works include prestigious New York City men's clubs, private estate residences for the Astors, houses on the Gold Coast of Long Island, houses along the Main Line near Philadelphia, and in Santa Barbara, California.

W. A. Delano, originally a Philadelphian, began teaching architecture at Columbia University shortly after he left the offices of Carrère and Hastings in 1903. He continued to teach until 1910 when the demands of his office practice took all of his attention. In 1924 Delano was made a member of the National Commission of Fine Arts and was a member of the design board for the 1939 World's Fair in New York. After his retirement, Delano wrote his memoirs and later tape recorded them for Columbia University. He made no mention of the Kykuit project.

C. H. Aldrich, originally from Providence, was an Italophile and served from 1917 to 1919 as Director General of the American Red Cross Commission to Italy. After 1925, when he was fifty-four and semi-retired, Aldrich was appointed Director of the American Academy in Rome. He died at his residence there, Villa Aurelia, in December of 1940. The firm kept its name after Aldrich's death and went on to design many later important projects, including the 1940 LaGuardia Air Terminal, and the 1944 enlargements of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Delano returned to his alma mater, the Lawrenceville (Boys) School, in the 1950s to design the new library there.⁶⁸

Ogden Codman, Jr. (1862-1951) was born in Boston to a wealthy New England family. He spent much of his youth in France, Italy, and England. He studied architecture at MIT and was apprenticed to his uncle, John Hubbard Sturgis. Codman opened his own Boston office in 1891 with residential commissions from family and friends for houses around Boston, in Newport, and in New York. One of his early commissions was the 1893 major remodeling and landscaping of a house for Edith Wharton (1862-1937), Land's End, at Newport, Rhode Island. After six years of independent practice Codman co-authored *The Decoration of Houses* with Edith Wharton, in 1897. Their book was a manifesto of eclectic style that preached "elegance without excess." Codman collaborated with many other architects throughout his long and successful career. He kept up a constant travel pattern to Europe where he selected or ordered art works, rare materials, ornaments, furniture, hardware, and carpets for his American clients. In his late career, Codman became an American antiquarian, recording historic buildings of the Colonial period. He retired to France where he had two villas, one at Brie-Compte-Robert and another at Villefranche-sur-Mer.

Notes

Many of the following notes refer to RAC (Rockefeller Archive Center), or RFA (Rockefeller Family Archive), or OMR (Office of the Messrs. Rockefeller).

1. Geology of the Hudson River Valley: Molly Vaux, "A Strong Brown God," *Columbia Magazine*, (New York: 1983): 9-15, 40-41; the Dutch: Canning and Buxton, *A History of the Tarrytowns*, 18-19; pronunciation and spelling of Kykuit: my interview with Dutch scholar at RAC; *Preservation*, vol. 44, no. 5, letters, : 11.
2. Washington Irving: Wilson and Fisk, *Appleton's Cyclopedia*, vol. III, 363; Canning and Buxton, *A History*, 61. G.W. Parsons: F.W. Beers, A.D. Elis, and G.G. Soule, *Atlas of New York, 1867*. See pl. 10, land plan of the Tarrytowns showing Parsons property. Atlas business register lists Parsons as N.Y. real estate and insurance broker.
3. For the sake of space and simplicity in this article I have resorted to the use of initials: JDR, for the senior Rockefeller, and JDR, Jr., when referring to his youngest child and only son.
4. RAC, OMR, letterbooks, vol. 385 (September 29, 1893): 379, from Rockefeller, handwritten, to J.C. Payne (land surveyor) of Jersey City.
5. F.L. Olmsted: Elizabeth Stevenson, *Park Maker*, 422-427; W.A. Manning: OMR, letterbooks, vol. 41 (March 20, 1894): 393.
6. My claim: John D. Rockefeller, *Random Reminiscences of Men and Events* (New York: Sleepy Hollow Press and Rockefeller Archive Center), 36, reproduction (1984) of autobiographical series in *The World's Work*, 1908-1909.
7. JDR's early life: Allan Nevins, *Study in Power: John D. Rockefeller, Industrialist and Philanthropist*, vol. 1:2-4. Op. cit., "Adventures in Oil," vol. 1, ch. II:20-37.
8. Homes: Raymond B. Fosdick, *John D. Rockefeller, Jr.: A Portrait*, 3-6. Also see photo of family circle.
9. Miles of roads: Rockefeller, *Reminiscences*, 37.
10. Rockwood Hall: RAC, 1004, WAR Family-Homes, Album Box 27.
11. Rat trap: Albert I. Berber MS in collection at RAC, *My Father's House at Pocantico Hills* (1985), 43-45.
12. At Pocantico: *Reminiscences*, 34.
13. Natty Bumppo: James F. Cooper, *The Pioneers*.
14. Map File #181, Greenrock Corporation vault: Warren H. Manning, Superintendent of Planting and Edward P. Bolton, Superintendent of Construction, "Preliminary Study for House Site, Approach Drive and Other Arrangements Near House," March 25, 1895. See drawings No. 10 & 25.
15. I fixed my stakes: *Reminiscences*, 37.
16. Relieve myself of business cares: *Reminiscences*, 78, 80. JDR had planned to retire in the early 1890s. "Having begun work so young, I felt that at fifty it was due me to have freedom . . ."
17. I find myself less inclined: OMR, letterbooks, vol. 42 (September 4, 1895), 459f; RFA, Homes: Contract with Dinkle and Jewell of Irvington, NY for excavation and quarry work, 80,000 cubic yards of rock. The Tarrytown *Argus*, November 23, 1895. Also see Berber, 88.
18. Fire: The Tarrytown *Argus*, September 21, 1895; OMR letterbooks, vol. 39:46.
19. RFA, RG II, Homes Box 43, f=property purchases, 1893-1905: Newspaper clipping relating tax appeal for both JDR, Sr.'s and his brother's properties. JDR, Jr.: Fosdick, *A Portrait*, 83-103.

20. JDR, Sr.'s health: John E. Harr and Peter J. Johnson, *The Rockefeller Century* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988), 30-31, 51. Fosdick, *A Portrait*, 131. Nevins, *Study in Power*: vol. I: 347-348 and vol. II: 86, 94, 276 (Alopecia Nervosa), 292, 293, & 361. Dr. H.P. Biggars, of Cleveland, Ohio, stated "He will live to be a hundred."
21. "The Gospel of Greed and the Gospel of Wealth." Foster R. Dulles, *The United States Since 1865*, 55-68.
22. Misdeeds: Hephurn (Senator William Peters) Commission hearings began 1879, and Sherman (Senator John) Bill, introduced 12/4/1889, Act 7/2/1890. Nevins, vol. I: 137 & 313.
23. "The Well-being of Mankind," Nevins, vol. II, ch. XXXVII, 386-403. J.T. Flynn, *God's Gold: The Story of Rockefeller and His Times* (New York: Macmillan, 1932).
24. JDR, Jr. to York & Sawyer: OMR, letterbooks, vol. 59: 460 (April 17, 1900), vol. 60: 410 (June 12, 1900), vol. 60:491 (June 26, 1900), vol. 63:177 (December 18, 1900), vol. 63:219 (December 20, 1900), vol. 71:275 (May 12, 1902), vol. 73:412 (October 8, 1902). Also see RFA Series B, vouchers.
25. JDR, Sr., Duffer: Nevins, vol. II: 292-294.
26. Candace T. Wheeler, *Yesterdays in a Busy Life*, 1918. Denis Steadman, Francis Architects in *Practice in New York City: 1840-1900*. Also see Madeline B. Stren, "Wheeler, Candace Thurber" in *Notable American Women* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1974), vol. III, ed. Edward T. James.
27. JDR, Jr. and Abby: Neil Harris, "Rockefeller, Abby Greene Aldrich," biography in *Notable American Women*, vol. III. Nevins, vol. II:297 & 298. Fosdick, *A Portrait*, 100-103. Harr & Johnson, *Century*, 45, 51, 54, 91-95, 99 & 100.
28. Fire Sept. 17, 1902: The Tarrytown *Argus* (a Saturday weekly), September 20, 1902. OMR, letterbooks, vol. 253: 98 (September 23, 1902), from JDR, Jr. to his mother.
29. Chester H. Aldrich, family connection: My interview and communications with J. Winthrop Aldrich and subsequent letter, December 28, 1992, from David Aldrich, AIA (son of Chester's brother, John Aldrich). Chester was something like an eighth cousin to Abby Greene Aldrich. They had grown up together in Providence and were closer as friends than as blood kin.
30. Discouraging missive: OMR, letterbooks, vol. 74: 59 (October 29, 1902), JDR, Jr. to Aldrich.
31. Walters Art Gallery: Wilson & Fisk, *William Thompson Walters, 1820-1894*, biography. Wine merchant, philanthropist, and art collector, Baltimore, Maryland. Mark A. Hewitt, *The Architect and the American Country House 1890-1940* (Yale, 1990), 49. Delano met Henry Walters in Europe in 1903.
32. Frankly I expect: RG II, Homes Box 22, f206 (August 5, 1904), JDR, Jr. to Aldrich.
33. Ida M. Tarbell, "A Character Study," *McClure's*, vol. XXV, No. 5 (July, 1905).
34. Muckraker: Term credited to President Theodore Roosevelt, who compared such journalists to "The Man with the Muckrake" in *Pilgrim's Progress*. The name given by the popular press to one of their own. See *The Business of Being a Woman*, 1912, and *All in the Day's Work*, 1939. Also see Benet, "Ida M. Tarbell," *Reader's Encyclopedia*.
35. Starrett brothers in Chicago: Tom F. Peters, "The Rise of the Skyscraper from the Ashes of Chicago," *American Heritage of Inventions and Technology*, vol. 3, no. 2, fall 1987. Also see William A. Starrett, *Skyscrapers and the Men Who Built Them*, 1929.
36. RAC, Map file #104, drawer 25: "Map of Tarrytown and Vicinity," Ward Carpenter & Son, 1880. U.S. Survey 500' at Kykuit Hill.
37. Codman: RG II, Homes Box 22, f206 (memo December 10, 1906), JDR, Jr.'s account of communications and conversations with Delano and Aldrich regarding Codman's position in pro-

- ject. Also see Richard Guy Wilson's catalog *American Renaissance: 1876-1917*, Brooklyn Museum, 1979.
38. RFA, Homes 1006, R.W. Grange Album: The Grange brothers (Robert and Thomas) worked for Thompson-Starrett during the construction of Kykuit II. Years after the general contractors disbanded (1913), R.W. Grange salvaged the progress photos and gave them to JDR, Jr.
 39. F.M.L. Tonetti: Isabelle K. Savell, *The Tonetti Years at Snedens Landing* (New York: The Historical Society of Rockland County, 1977).
 40. Marquis D'Aux: Arthur L. George, "The Rockefeller Gardens at Pocantico Hills," in *Vanity Fair* (August, 1914): 24-27. Also see RFA, RG III, 2 T.
 41. Plan revisions: RG II, Homes Box 22, f206 (July 13, 1907), Delano and Aldrich disowned the plans as compromised by too many hands.
 42. Keith N. Morgan, *Charles A. Platt: The Artist as Architect* (MIT, 1985).
 43. The delicacy of the situation: RG II Homes, Box 22, f206 (June 7, 1911), JDR, Jr. to W.A. Delano regarding Bosworth's redesign of facade.
 44. The Social Evil: Harr & Johnson, Ch. 1, "The Rockefeller Legacy, 1889-1918, The Progressive," 109-111. George K. Turner, "The Traders in Women," *Harper's Weekly* (June 21, 1913): 11.
 45. On my father's behalf: RG III, 2 I, Box 39, f373 (April 28, 1911), JDR, Jr. to C.T. Wills.
 46. C.T. Wills: *Architectural Record* (April, 1902): 105-110. RG II Homes, Box 52, f413 (February 4, 1911) JDR, Jr. to his father. Wills' projects: RG II Homes, Box 52, f413 (March 10, 1911) list of 58 projects built by C.T. Wills.
 47. American Bridge: RG III, Homes, Box 39, f373 (letter August 2, memo August 4, letter July 21, telegram July 24, 1911) to, from or concerning Joshua A. Hatfield, President, American Bridge Co. of New York. American Bridge was a subsidiary of U.S. Steel.
 48. Tunnel: RG II, Homes, Box 52, f413 (June 12, 1911), and Box 56, f451 (June 20, 1911).
 49. No. 10 West 54th Street: RG II Homes, Box 139, f10W (July 11, August 7, and December 7, 1911).
 50. Condensation: RG II, Homes Box 18, f169 (October 8, 1911), M.A. Munn at 7 W. 53rd St. to C.O. Heydt at 26 Broadway.
 51. Blasting: RG II, Homes Box 52, f414 (March 4, 1912), JDR, Jr. to his father.
 52. Do I understand: RG II, Homes Box 52, f414 (March 22, 1912), JDR, Jr. to his father.
 53. Charles Grosvenor Osgood, *Boswell's Life of Johnson* (Oxford: 1931). James Boswell (1740-1795) journals and humorous chronicles of Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709-1784).
 54. Black Hand: RFA, index cards 1913-14-15 reports of investigations by Wm. J. Burns National Detective Agency. Refer to file case #8, dr. #2. "All corres. Destroyed at office authorization." *New York Times*, August 19, 1912, "Robbery at Tarrytown."
 55. Boboli: Isabel Currier, "A Maine Quarry's Fabulous Feat," *Down East: The Magazine of Maine* (May 1968): 23-26, 48 & 49. Also see Edith Wharton, *Italian Villas and Their Gardens* (New York: Century, 1904) with Maxfield Parrish illustrations and a photo of Boboli (Oceanus) fountain.
 56. Fire III: RG II, Homes Box 52, f415 (July 1, 1913), telegram from JDR, Jr. in Maine to his father in Forest Hill.
 57. The right architect: RG II, Homes Box 52, f415 (July 3, 5, 8 & 10, 1913), letters and telegrams from JDR, Jr. in Maine to his father at Forest Hill.

58. Costs: RG III 2 I, Homes Box 15, f141 (November 13, 1914), accounting by Charles O. Heydt for JDR, Jr. and Bosworth.
59. Post & McCord: RG III 2 I, Homes Box 15, f141 (January 15, 1914), request for payment of extra, Andrew J. Post.
60. Henry S. Thompson: *New York Times*, obit., Sunday, April 6, 1947, 60.
61. William A. Starrett: *New York Times*, obit., Sect. II, Sunday, Mar. 27, 1932, 4-N.
62. William Baumgarten: *New York Times*, obit., Sect. II, Sunday, April 29, 1906, 6.
63. Charles T. Wills: *New York Times*, obit., Wednesday, Sept. 1, 1915, 9.
64. Warren H. Manning: *New York Times*, obit., Sect. II, Sunday, Feb. 6, 1938, 9. Also see many entries in Griswold and Weller's *The Golden Age of American Gardens: Proud Owners, Private Estates, 1890-1940* (Abrams, 1992).
65. William W. Bosworth: *Brickbuilder* (NY 1915), biography, vol. 24, 102. Steven McLeod Bedford's entry, *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects*, vol. 4: 261. *New York Times*, obit., Sect. L, Sunday, June 5, 1966, 86. See Bosworth's membership papers (6170) and dossier, Society of Mayflower Descendants in the State of New York. Also see report of birthday party at the American Club, *Paris Herald*, May 9, 1960, "Dean of American Colony in France."
66. York and Sawyer: Henry Hope Reed's profile entry, *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects*, vol. 4: 460 & 461. Also see Henry F. and Elsie R. Withey's *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)*, 536 & 537 (Sawyer), 675 & 676 (York).
67. Dunham Wheeler: *New York Times*, obit., col. 3, Mar. 4, 1938, 23. OMR, Card Files on microfilm, letterbooks, vol. 99: 435 & 479. *Builder and Woodworker*, vol. 28, part 12: 19-21, Dec. 1891-Jan. 1892. *The Lakewood Times and Journal*, vol. XXXV, no. 1798, Oct. 10, 1902, also Jan. 9, 1903. *Ontora: Hills of the Sky, 1887-1987* (Tannersville, N.Y.), *Architectural League of New York - Catalog*, 1898.
68. Delano and Aldrich: *New York Times*, obit. (Aldrich), Sect. L, Friday, December 27, 1940, 19. See Withey, 13 & 14. See Steven McLeod Bedford's firm profile, *Macmillan Encyclopedia*, vol. 1. *New York Times*, obit. (Delano), Jan. 13, 1960, 48. Also see W.A. Delano papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, and oral history tape, Columbia University, Avery Library, d-9554, MS 178, 1950. Also see Brendan Gill, "William Adams Delano—Gentleman Architect," *Architectural Digest*, vol. 47 (Dec. 1990): 88-96.