

The Castle Legacy

HISTORIC ARCHITECTURAL STUDY OF THE CASTLE IN THE CLOUDS COMPLETED

Maine Architectural Firm Blueprints Restoration Plans for the Future

The Castle in the Clouds, December 2004.

David Roberts Photo

“It is an unparalleled monument in the history of summer home building in New Hampshire. The estate warrants every effort toward preservation and public access. Apart from the value of the land as land, the estate epitomizes an important chapter in New Hampshire history and stands as a unique architectural creation.”

These are the words used by James L. Garvin, New Hampshire State Architectural Historian and author of the award-winning book *A Building History of Northern New England*, to describe the Castle in the Clouds.

Inspired by these words, the Castle Preservation Society, subsidiary of the Lakes Region Conservation Trust, commissioned a comprehensive historic structures study of the Castle and its associated historic buildings by Barba + Wheelock, Planning, Architecture + Design of Portland, Maine. Barba + Wheelock, a nationally recognized expert in the field of historic building restoration and preservation, commenced the study early this year and has now completed an extensive architectural and structural evaluation of the buildings. The Barba + Wheelock report addresses architecture, roofing, masonry, structural integrity, mechanical and electrical systems, and accessibility, and it

represents the primary ingredient in creating a “blueprint” for repair and restoration of these magnificent buildings.

The Barba + Wheelock report states that the Castle in the Clouds is significant not only for its unique architectural style, but also for its amazingly intact eclectic interior that represents the work of some of America’s finest Arts & Crafts style designers and craftsmen.

“From an architectural history perspective,” the report notes, “one of the most fascinating aspects of this complex of buildings (in particular the Main House and Carriage House) is that from the exterior these buildings appear as English Arts & Crafts cottages with exposed heavy timber rafter tail brackets and half-timbering. Markings on these wood details suggest hand-hewn work but closer inspection suggests that there are oak timber elements with applied hewing (or “scorping”). The concealed structural system belies the charming hand-hewn appearance, with its steel beams and concrete slab floors over board forms and clay tile back-up to the masonry veneer. In addition, the original owner enjoyed state of the art technology in many of the modern amenities.”

Barba + Wheelock was assisted in conducting its evaluation by a number of highly regarded firms. These include The Heritage Company of East Waterboro, Maine—roofing assessment, Richard Irons Restoration Masons of Limerick, Maine—masonry assessment, Allied Engineering, Inc. of Westbrook, Maine—assessment of the mechanical and electrical systems, Engineering Ventures, of Burlington, Vermont and Falmouth, Maine—structural analysis, Alpha One of South Portland, Maine—accessibility analysis, and Woodward Thomsen of Portland, Maine—cost estimating.



Nancy Barba Photo

Late afternoon view of the balcony on the south side of the Castle.

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THE VIEW FROM THE CROW'S NEST

There is an oft-repeated saying about those who are ignorant of history being condemned to repeat it—the point being that the universe repeatedly serves us up the lessons we need until we finally decide to learn from them. But for a lot of New Englanders (I dare say, for a lot of Americans), the idea of repeating history has nothing to do with condemnation—it is something we do with joy, something we see as a part of who we are, something we engage in as an act of faith. We are who we are because of the images in our mind's eye, some of which have to do with our parents and family, some of which have to do with our schooling and our experience, and a great deal of which has to do with our connection to the places we love. As I write these words, for example, the Old Man of the Mountains is not only geologically intact, it is located here at my keyboard, in the minds of those reading these lines, and in the hearts of millions of people around the country and the world who have been inspired and enthralled by it. Under the circumstances, its future is both constrained and limitless, and at this time, completely in the hands of the living generations.

The Castle in the Clouds presents us with an opportunity to join forces with the living history of New England, New Hampshire, and the Lakes Region. The era of the grand summer estate, the life and times of Thomas and Olive Plant, the Russian bonds, and famous visitors are only a part of the story. As we are learning now, the saga of the Castle begins with the hill farmers whose faith, optimism, and incredible hard work created a small community of subsistence homesteads that thrived in the lap of Faraway Mountain for the hundred years or so following Jefferson's presidency. We have barely begun to decipher the stories that those



Nancy Barba Photo

View from Thomas Plant's chamber.

cellar holes, grave markers, stonewalls, and still-living apple trees and daylily beds have to tell us. Eventually, the farm families were joined by city rusticators, hunters, fishermen, and hikers, who came up-country by rail and steamboat, and took horse-drawn "conveyances" into the hinterlands out from Alton and Wolfeboro and Center Harbor. Then came the day of Benjamin Shaw, who envisioned a vast park for the benefit of the public in the generation before Tom Plant came to the Ossipees with an army of stonemasons to create his unique and beautiful Castle and, as a by-product, the legacy of "The Castle and the Club" that lives on today at Bald Peak. Then came the Tobeys and the Robies, then J. Paul Sticht, a man with a vision of his own, then the Lakes Region Conservation Trust, taking its turn in the saga of ownership and responsibility.

What we have here is a gem, and an opportunity, of the first order for all who care about our historic heritage in New Hampshire. The hopes and fears of all the former owners, occupants, and sojourners are indeed met in you today. The universe teaches us many things—at Shaker Village, at Strawberry Banke, at the Wentworth-Coolidge Mansion, it teaches us that we are accorded wonderful opportunities to inherit faith and tradition and inspiration, and that all we need to do in order to take title to these things is to commit ourselves and our resources to their preservation in our time. Like everything else in the New World, it is up to us.

Best wishes from all of us for a joyous holiday season and a prosperous New Year.

Handwritten signature of Thomas S. Curren.

Thomas S. Curren
President
Lakes Region Conservation Trust

THE HIGH VALLEY COMMUNITY OF THE OSSIPEE MOUNTAINS

A century before Thomas Plant came to the Lakes Region, a hardy band of families made their homes within a short distance of the Castle on homestead farms that became known as the Lee Settlement. In our day, the thought of living year round high up in the Ossipees might seem impossible, but we know from records, photographs, family histories, and maps that six major families were in residence in the valley of Shannon Brook in 1860, carrying on a tradition that began at least several generations before.

In the period immediately after the Industrial Revolution, the new mills of Lawrence, Lowell, and Manchester called for thousands of bales of wool in order to meet the demand for "store-bought" clothes throughout the country. Hill country farmers whose livelihoods depended more on frugality than income were suddenly faced with the prospect of earning hard cash from a crop that didn't need

to be slaughtered to be harvested...and that reproduced by twins and oftentimes triplets every year. An era of prosperity ensued, and farms blossomed wherever favorable land could be identified.

The southeast-facing shelf of land in the Shannon Valley attracted a little settlement of Robertses, Whittens, Copps, Withams, Hornes, and, of course, Lees, who, by 1860, comprised a thriving farm community above Lake Winnepesaukee. The advent of "rusticators" from eastern cities brought opportunities to peddle milk and eggs to summer folks, to guide fishermen and hunters, and, eventually, to supply the summer visitors to B.F Shaw's Weelahka Hall with meat and vegetables. Here, in snugly shingled Cape-Cod style houses, generations were born, grew to productive adulthood, and eventually were laid to rest high above Winnepesaukee.

This activity ended soon after Thomas Plant's acquisition of the Castle. By the close of World War I, most of the families of the Lee Settlement had moved downhill into the valleys and settlements, following a pattern that was in force from Maine to upstate New York. Yet even a short walk in the woods, past cellar holes and stonewalls, past "pecker-fretted" apple trees, past lilac bushes and clumps of daylilies still struggling for sunlight, speaks volumes of the industry and optimism, the joys and heartaches, and the heritage of home left by our predecessors, the families of the Shannon Brook Valley.

Special thanks to Brenda Sherwood, a teacher of U.S. History and American Studies at Bow (NH) High School and a graduate student in the Heritage Studies Program at Plymouth State University, who has generously donated her research regarding the families of the Lee Settlement.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE CASTLE IN THE CLOUDS

The following overview of the history of the Castle in the Clouds is adapted from the introduction to Barba + Wheelock's report on the Castle. It is based on historical information provided to Barba + Wheelock by Jane Nylander from existing publications and recent research by herself, Cristina Ashjian, and others.

The Castle in the Clouds has been a popular tourist attraction for almost 45 years. Constructed in 1913 and 1914 by Thomas G. Plant, an inventor and shoe-

manufacturing tycoon, the Castle is a majestic sixteen-room mansion that sits atop Lee Mountain in the Ossipee Mountains of New Hampshire. Plant developed "Lucknow," as it was originally called, into a 6,300 acre estate that consisted of the main house with a greenhouse, a stable (now called the Carriage House), two stone gatehouses,

farm buildings, a 9-hole golf course, a man-made lake, and miles of hiking and riding trails. With the exception of the golf course and greenhouse, much of the original estate still exists today.

Ossipee Mountain Park

Prior to Plant's acquisition of the property, the area was known to local residents and visitors as Ossipee Mountain Park. The park was the creation of Benjamin F. Shaw, owner of the Shaw Knit Stocking Company of Lowell, MA and a life member of the

Appalachian Mountain Club. After acquiring the property in 1879, Shaw developed a small hotel and a semi-private park. The public was permitted to ride the carriage trails, fish in the ponds, and picnic on the property. The natural beauty of the park made it a popular destination for numerous writers and poets, such as John Greenleaf Whittier. Shaw died in 1890 and shortly thereafter the property was sold.

Lucknow's Owner: Thomas Gustave Plant

Born in 1859 in Bath, Maine, Thomas Gustave Plant left his family as a teenager to take a job at a Massachusetts shoe factory. Apparently, Mr. Plant had strong technical abilities and worked his way up through the ranks of the shoe manufacturing industry. In 1891, he founded his own business in Lynn, Massachusetts that became well known for its outstanding women's footwear. Over the years he developed and patented several items to expedite the manufacturing of shoes. In 1910, Plant sold his company and its related interests to the United Shoe Machinery Corporation. According to some sources, Mr. Plant's fortune was between \$10 and \$21 million upon the sale to United Shoe. This fortune enabled him to build Lucknow.

Plant was married twice, and he lived at the Castle with his second wife, Olive Dewey. They had no children. Plant also funded the construction of a retirement home in Bath, Maine, in 1917. The Plant family fortunes declined as a result of bad investments, many in Russian bonds. In 1928, the entire Lucknow estate was mortgaged to Robert Clayton. In 1930, the property was signed over to Joseph H. Emery, and then by will, to his son, Jackson H. Emery of Mount Vernon, New York and Robert J. Porter of Jersey City,



Historical photo of Witham homestead.

Photo courtesy of John Oliver

Donna DiCasparro Photo



Nancy Barba Photo



Nancy Barba Photo



Lucinda Hackman Photo



From left to right: Painted glass medallions in Castle windows, depicting partridges, footbridge over Shannon Brook, and lake and mountain views.

NJ, who were Trustees of Joseph's estate. Thomas and Olive continued to live at the estate until his death in 1941. In 1942, Emery and Porter sold the estate to Fred C. Tobey.

Lucknow: A Mountain and Lake Estate

While traveling in Europe in 1911, Plant reportedly learned that the property was for sale and instructed his brother, William, to purchase the property sight-unseen. By acquiring surrounding parcels, Plant amassed an estate that stretched all the way to the shores of Lake Winnepesaukee. He then set about creating a private retreat in the Ossipee Mountains.

The main house is sited in a location previously occupied by "The Crow's Nest," a wooden look-out structure that afforded dramatic views of Lake Winnepesaukee and the surrounding area. There are numerous stories as to who designed the main house, how many architects Plant retained and then fired in the process, and whether Plant "designed" the house himself. However, the April 1924 issue of *Country Life* and the July 21, 1923 edition of the *Boston Evening Transcript* and other sources reference J. Williams Beal Sons of Boston as the architects.

J. Williams Beal (1855–1919) was born at South Scituate, now Norwell, MA. After graduating from MIT at the age of 22, he worked in New York City as a draftsman with Richard M. Hunt and later with the noted architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White and then spent several years traveling in Europe. In 1888, upon returning to Boston, he formed a partnership with his two sons. By 1915, the firm was known as J. Williams Beal Sons. Beal's work included both residential and civic related structures, including the Executive Building and Club House for the Walkover Shoe Company in Brockton, Massachusetts, the Repertory Theatre (now known as the Huntington Theatre) in Boston, and the Hyannis Trust Company in Hyannis, Massachusetts.

There are numerous stories concerning the construction of the 16-room main house and its related buildings. Plant reportedly hired

anywhere between several hundred to 1,000 masons to work on the construction of the various buildings and walls on the property. A significant amount of ledge was blasted to create a buildable area on the mountain. The blasted stone was hand cut into five-sided pieces that were used to face the main house, the retaining walls, and the stable. Reportedly, shipbuilders and craftsmen from Plant's hometown of Bath, Maine were brought in to craft all the oak timbers used in the house. (It is not clear whether the oak came from the property or was shipped in.) The lead casement windows were reported to be from England and the marble used in the fireplace surrounds was shipped from Italy. A packing crate board used as sheathing in the attic (near the grand skylight) contains the following partial address: "Thomas Plant via Weirs." This evidence reflects the way materials and furnishings were delivered to the site. At that time one could travel by railroad to the Weirs and by steamer across Lake Winnepesaukee from the Weirs to Melvin Village. From Melvin Village, one would take a carriage to Lucknow.

Real estate advertisements promoting the property in 1924 and 1934 provide important documentation about the design and construction of the house. According to these real estate brochures, an impressive list of well-known Arts & Crafts-influenced decorative artists are associated with the property, including Irving & Casson, A.H. Davenport Co., William Jackson & Company, Edward F. Caldwell Company, and Tiffany Studios. As of the date of this report, work by all of those except Tiffany Studios has been verified.

Irving & Casson, A.H. Davenport Co., based in Boston, were designers and producers of high-end furniture and interior decoration objects. The Company dominated the field of furniture manufacturing into the 20th century. Irving & Casson, A.H. Davenport Co. was supposedly responsible for interior woodwork and decoration at Lucknow. Several pieces of furniture at Lucknow correspond to photographs in the company's archives, and the Irving & Casson collection at Winterthur



Original light fixture designed by Edward F. Caldwell Company of New York City. Nancy Barba Photo



The Castle's north turret.

Nancy Barba Photo

includes a 1916 order from Tom Plant for a wood box. The interior and exterior bronze and tile work is attributed to William Jackson & Company.

Edward F. Caldwell Company of New York City was one of the premier designers of light fixtures, as well as desk sets, clocks, andirons, and even some furniture. Committed to the Arts & Crafts philosophy, the company handcrafted its products. Caldwell's commissions included private homes, such as that of Frederick W. Vanderbilt, and several prominent public buildings, including the White House and St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. Residential commissions dominated the early years of the company's work. Custom designs for work done for Tom Plant have been located in the Caldwell archives, and many of the minor lighting devices at the Castle appear to be stock items of this company.

The Castle's Main Hall, Library, and Dining Room are the most elaborately finished interior spaces, and these rooms contain the work of these various decorative artists and furniture makers.

In addition to the Arts & Crafts-influenced interior decoration, Plant had numerous technological improvements integrated into the Main House. These included a refrigeration system, central vacuum, interior fire hose, intercom, and spring-fed plumbing and heating system. He even included an organ by the Aeolian Company.

While Ossipee Mountain Park no longer existed for picnicking and fishing, Plant permitted visitors to tour the property in horse drawn vehicles from 1917 to mid-August 1922. Only a decade after completing Lucknow, Plant put the property on the market - an indication of his financial difficulties, which would ultimately result in his loss of ownership of the property.

Lucknow to Castle in the Clouds

After Plant's death in 1941, the property was purchased by his friend, Fred C. Tobey. For fifteen years, the Tobey family lived at the property from May through November. In 1956 the property was sold to Richard and Donald Robie. Richard Robie, owner and president of the International Avis

Rent-A-Car System gave the estate its current name of Castle in the Clouds and opened it to the public.

In 1991, the Castle property was acquired by J. Paul Sticht, who established the Castle Springs water bottling business and continued operation of the Castle as a historic mountaintop estate open to the public. Mr. Sticht's stewardship of the Castle property ensured that it remained in an unspoiled state and made it possible for the Lakes Region Conservation Trust to acquire and protect this magnificent property for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations.

SUMMER ACTIVITIES: THE YEAR IN REVIEW

The Castle Preservation Society completed a busy summer of lectures and presentations at the Castle's Carriage House with outstanding speakers on natural, historical, and cultural topics. A highlight of these programs was a presentation on the farming settlement that existed on the Castle property during the 1800s, entitled "Uncovering a 19th Century High Valley Community in the Ossipees," presented by Brenda Sherwood, a participant in the Plymouth State University Heritage Studies Program.

Other outstanding programs and their speakers included "The Geology of New Hampshire and the White Mountains" (Timothy T. Allen, Ph.D., Keene State College Professor of Geology and Environmental Studies); "Angling in the Smile of the Great Spirit" (Dr. Harold C. Lyon, Jr., author of *Angling in the Smile of the Great Spirit - Six Centuries of Wisdom from the Master Anglers of Lake Winnepesaukee*); "The Very Dailiness of It All: Life in Old Time New England" (Jane C. Nylander, President Emerita of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, Vice Chair of the Castle Preservation Society, and author of *Our Own Snug Fireside: Images of the New England Home, 1760-1860*); "Voices in the Woods: Abenaki Songs and Stories" (Willow Greene, Abenaki Indian Traditional Storyteller); "Discovering New England Stone Walls" (Kevin Gardner, stone wall builder with Owen Associates and author of *The Granite Kiss: Traditions and Techniques of Building New England Stone Walls*); and New Hampshire Wildlife (Sarah Benton, Naturalist, Squam Lakes Natural Science Center). In addition, in August the Castle Preservation Society hosted a special tour of the Castle for members of the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance.

The Castle Preservation Society greatly appreciates the contributions of all who presented these programs and who participated in their organization, and looks forward to another series of lectures and presentations next summer.



Summer view of Lake Winnepesaukee from the Castle in the Clouds.

Lucinda Hackman Photo

HISTORIC ARCHITECTURAL STUDY COMPLETED

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Castle Preservation Society Sets 2014 Goal for Restoration

With the Barba + Wheelock report in hand, the Castle Preservation Society can now proceed with planning for repair and restoration of the Castle and associated historic buildings. Barba + Wheelock has outlined expert repair and restoration work with an anticipated total cost of more than \$3,000,000, and the Castle Preservation Society has set a goal of completing restoration by 2014, the 100th anniversary of the building of the Castle. This is an ambitious but, we believe, attainable goal, given the enormous support already demonstrated for this landmark property. In addition, the Castle Preservation Society plans educational and cultural programs and exhibits that will help to make the Castle a true community resource.

The extraordinary generosity of many people made it possible for the Lakes Region Conservation Trust to purchase the Castle in the Clouds property and for the Castle Preservation Society to commission the Barba + Wheelock study. In a year with unparalleled potential tax advantages for some donors (see summary below), the Lakes Region Conservation Trust and the Castle Preservation Society are now seeking donations for the Castle Capital Fund, in support of the restoration and preservation of the Castle buildings, and for the Castle Annual Fund, in support of programming and operations that make the Castle a cultural resource for the entire region as well as a landmark destination for thousands of individuals and their families who have the privilege of living in or visiting the Lakes Region of New Hampshire.

Please make your donations to the Lakes Region Conservation Trust and direct them to: Lakes Region Conservation Trust, P.O. Box 1097, Meredith, NH 03253-1097. Gifts of securities may be directed to the Lakes Region Conservation Trust, c/o RBC Dain Rauscher, P.O. Box 2334, One Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02108-3176 (Account number: 1011 14001672 DTC#235). If you are



The Castle in the Clouds, December 2004.

Nancy Barba Photo

making a gift of securities, please call our office (603-279-3246) or e-mail us at lrct@metrocast.net to notify us of the name and number of shares of the stock you are donating. Thank you for your consideration!

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

To **Jane Nylander, Bill Anderson, Ann Hackl, Don McLeod, Lyn Seley, Anne Vanderwolk, Fred Preston, Tony Edgar, Van McLeod, Kip Scott, Karen Beranger, Greg Diltz, Cristina Ashjian, and Penny Batcheler** for their work on behalf of the Castle.

To **Kate Thompson, Kristen Clothier, David Roberts,** and the members of the LRCT Education Committee for their work on the cellar holes and traditions of the Oak Ridge Trail.

To **Brenda Sherwood** for her valued work on the history of the High Valley Community of the Ossipee Mountains, and **Blake Allen** of the Plymouth State University Heritage Studies program for her guidance on this project.

NEW INCENTIVES FOR 2005 CHARITABLE GIVING

The Katrina Emergency Tax Relief Act of 2005, enacted earlier this fall, provides new incentives for donors to make cash gifts to charities by the end of 2005. Under existing law, deductions for charitable donations are limited to 50 percent of a taxpayer's adjusted gross income and are also subject to a formula that reduces deductions for taxpayers with incomes above specified thresholds. For cash gifts made between August 28 and December 31, 2005 to any charity, not just those involved in Hurricane Katrina relief efforts, the new provisions allow donors to deduct an amount equal to 100 percent of their adjusted gross incomes and to avoid the reduction in deductions otherwise applicable to higher-income donors. **Thus, where a donor wants to make a significant gift or complete an outstanding pledge, a cash gift in 2005 may result in tax benefits not otherwise available.** Congress included these provisions out of concern that donors who had given to hurricane and other disaster relief efforts during the past year might cut back on donations to other charities. These provisions apply only to cash donations, not to gifts of appreciated stock, real estate, or other property, and do not apply to corporate donors.

As with other tax matters, donors should consult with their tax advisors to determine the application of the new provisions to their circumstances.