CHAPTER ONE

The Resort

Stockbridge Bowl is a double-barreled name. It had always been used by the Jesuits of Shadowbrook to describe the long valley and the ring of hills they could view from their front porch. But this is only another instance of where the Jesuits and the world disagree, for on all approved maps—for example, the U.S. Geodetic Survey map—it is used as the name of a medium-sized lake which held central place when the eye scanned the land- and mountain-scape from the same vantage point on the Shadowbrook porch. In fact, it was no less an authority than Catherine Sedgwick who originally gave it this title. However, since the lake is more familiarly known by one of those traditional Indian names which make New England’s geography a spelling bee nightmare, and since, after all, the Jesuits are going to have pride of place throughout this journal, we shall refer to it, as do most of the local people, as Lake Mahkeenac, and reserve “Stockbridge Bowl” or “The Bowl” for the landscape.

The Bowl, then, when viewed from the center of its northern slope, from the side of Baldhead Mountain, that is, is one of those superb, almost grecianly balanced landscapes which seems to delight English painters. There is nothing violent in this view; each hill is rounded and green. The lake valley is spacious—its length is some fifteen miles—but its grandeur is quiet, modest and inclosed. The ring of hills (called “mountains”
only by courtesy) has just sufficient variety to escape mathematic regularity. The western slope is bounded by a long ridge, a part of the Taconic range, called Stockbridge Mountain, which runs about three miles north and south. Ordinarily it is a rather unobtrusive term for the sight, leading the eye back to the central picture of lake and distant field. But splashed with the moving shadows of fair-weather clouds, or ominous under an approaching thunderstorm, its long flank scoops out, it seems to heave itself to an unexpected height and demand the reverence due a mountain, moody and imperious.

A small conical hill and some distantly seen hills intervene between the end of Stockbridge Mountain and another ridge which runs east and west to bound the southern end of The Bowl. This ridge is the Monument Mountain of William Cullen Bryant’s trystful tale—the one where the Indian maiden figures, a-leaping for love. The name comes from a heap of rocks found at the foot of the eastern end. It was from the crags at this end of the ridge that the unrequited lady jumped, and the rocks are supposed to have been tossed there one by one by passing braves to honor her deed and allay her curse. These same crags have occasioned another little known dispute between the Jesuit residents of Shadowbrook and the rest of mankind. For seen from
the Shadowbrook vantage, they offer the steep brow and proud nose of a quite chinless, but unmistakable face, thrown back and up against the sky, and every Jesuit who has lived at Shadowbrook persists in calling Monument Mountain, despite its enshrinement under that title in American Literature, by the name “Indian Head.” Whichever name is preferred, it remains true that the Indian face adds just a touch of the bizarre to a landscape which otherwise might be too perfect to be really interesting.

The eastern side of The Bowl is bounded with surprising adequacy by a very small, long-sloping hill called Rattlesnake, which, while its summit is not over a quarter of a mile in length, is placed at a northeast, southwest angle in such a way that the eye travels almost immediately to the distant Indian face, completing the inclosure.

Mahkeenac is, as I have said, only a moderately large lake. Roughly a circle when seen, as we are seeing it, from the slope of Baldhead, it narrows towards its southern end like the tail of an ascension balloon, and resting in the valve sleeve is a tiny patch of an island, wooded with pine. Past the island, the lake spills over a weir into a creek which flows to the Housatonic. A mile or two beyond Mahkeenac, among the pines that march down from the end of Stockbridge Mountain, there is a tiny jewel of blue water called Averic by the mapmakers who choose to ignore the fact that it was Jenny Lind, who, riding past (singing, of course) christened it with charming triteness “Echo Lake.” Because of the two lakes the land at the southern end of Mahkeenac has been called, by mapmakers and people alike, “Interlaken.”

Fields, cultivated, rolling and folding in on themselves, make up the rest of The Bowl. There are none on the eastern side of The Bowl.
side, since the slopes of Rattlesnake come right down to the lake shores, but the expanse between Mahkeenac and Stockbridge Mountain, a distance varying between a quarter to a half mile, is filled with their colorful undulations. The six or seven miles between the end of the lake and the foot of Monument Mountain is also mostly farmland. Since, however, these fields are crumpled by perspective into a mere series of low pleats, it is well for the symmetry of the view that the woods high on the western slope of Monument Mountain have been cleared and cultivated in a large expanse called the “Sky Farm.”

Such is Stockbridge Bowl and the nomenclature thereof.

Its faults can be best summed up, perhaps, in a story told of Mr. Anson Phelps Stokes, the man who built the Shadowbrook mansion which is the subject of this informal history. Once when he was entertaining the ubiquitous English House Guest over cigars and coffee on his front porch, The Englishman, looking out through the stone arches toward the evening-colored Bowl, remarked: “It needs a touch of sublimity. Now if there were only a snow-capped mountain out there somewhere....” Stokes is reported to have replied, “For heaven’s sake, don’t say that to my wife. She’ll order one tomorrow.”

The story also serves to give an insight into the character of Stokes, but we can leave that for the moment.

The Bowl does not, I think, any longer arouse the raptures
it once did, and the Englishman’s criticism has to some degree prevailed. But when it was pronounced, it was close to sacrilege. For this was a landscape revered. The aesthetic arbiters of New England society pronounced it the most perfect in the Berkshires, which was tantamount to calling it the most perfect in all the America that counted. And the Berkshires did count—counted in the multi-millions before they were through.

Cleveland Amory uses Lenox in his chatty study *The Last Resorts* as the prime example of the law of resort history. Your typical resort, he says, begins with Creation and ends with taxes. To naturally lovely surroundings add writers, preferably poets, though novelists will do. Let the solution stand for a sufficient time to allow millionaires to form—at first “good” millionaires which he seems to define as those who can read the writers or at least enough about them to know where they live. These millionaires of the first crystallization are “good” because they, being readers, have *taste*. Gradually you will notice changes in your resort as it begins to form “bad” millionaires who have not got *taste*. (These are the millionaires who only read enough about millionaires to find out where they live.) From this point on you have a resort, fully formed, awaiting dissolution, the first signs of which can be detected in 1920 after the first decade of income tax and which will burst out in rank decay in 1929.

This “law” seems to trim a little to the wind, but it does offer a useful structure for a quick survey of the circumstances that made Shadowbrook what it was.

The first Berkshire writer seems to have been Jonathan Edwards. Naturally, we cannot look to his grim, Calvinistic tracts for the beginning of the Berkshire resort. Millionaires, not even “good” ones, are that intrepid and the day of the Stockbridge preacher came and passed with no change in local real estate values. The literary phase in the history of the Berkshire resort begins with that Catherine Sedgwick who renamed Lake Mahkeenac, Stockbridge Bowl. She is known now, I suppose, only to Doctors of Philosophy in American Literature and inhabitants of Stockbridge and Lenox, both of which towns claim her as their citizen. She was the literary-minded daughter of Judge Theodore Sedgwick of Lenox and a nineteenth-century lady novelist whose
outlook was much closer to George Eliot than, say, George Sand, and whose style is best tasted in quotation:

“Everell sunk calmly on his knees, not to supplicate life, but to commend his soul to God.... The Chief [Mononotto, wicked Indian] raised the deadly weapon, when Magawisca [good Indian, female], springing from the precipitous side of the rock, screamed “Forebear!” and interposed her arm. It was too late. The blow was leveled—force and direction given; the stroke, aimed at Everell’s neck, severed his defender’s arm, and left him unharmed. The lopped, quivering member dropped over the precipice. Mononotto staggered and fell senseless, and all the savages, uttering horrible yells, rushed toward the fatal spot.”

“‘Stand back!’ cried Magawisca, ‘I have bought his life with my own. Fly, Everell—nay, speak not, but fly—thither—to the east!’ she cried, more vehemently.”

“Everell’s faculties were paralyzed by a rapid succession of violent emotions. He was conscious only of a feeling of mingled gratitude and admiration for his preserver. He stood motionless, gazing on her. ‘I die in vain, then?’ she cried, in an accent of such despair that he was roused. He threw his arms around her, and pressed her to his heart as he would a sister that had redeemed his life with her own, and then, tearing himself from her, he disappeared.”

I have italicized a phrase which I feel must be one of the most carefully qualified psychological descriptions ever printed. Catherine was an emancipated lady for her period—she followed the traditional course, and abandoned the gloom of Calvinism for the gentle light of Doctor Channing—but she was never less than ladylike.

This type of thing won her a huge public for the time, and a list of acquaintances on both continents. Since name-dropping is unavoidable in this first chapter, let us reproduce a list of Miss Sedgwick’s friends from Olive A. Colton’s Lenox and have done with the business. Catherine was known to Lafayette, Daniel Webster, Louis Napoleon, Dickens, Thackeray, Rogers, Macauley, Carlyle, Fenimore Cooper, Morse, Channing, Harriet Beecher Stowe etc., etc. She is reported to have been a charming lady and she was certainly an incessant booster of the
Berkshires. For soon the literary lions began to arrive in prides, and in the ensuing racket a few native cubs were encouraged to roar. William Cullen Bryant, the young county clerk from Great Barrington, was protégé by Catherine and founded a long line of Berkshire authors—Holmes, Melville, Rachel Field, Edna Millay—their end is not seen yet. But the bulk of the art colony in the mid-century Berkshires was made up for most part of immigrants, and the most part of them friends of Catherine Sedgwick or friends of friends.

One of the first to come was Fanny Kemple who sat with Byron, heard Tom Moore sing and called Tennyson, “Alfred”—who also shocked the Berkshires by riding astride her horse, by reading *The Merry Wives of Windsor* to a church group in Stockbridge and by broaching a keg of beer for the boys who scythed her lawn. Before the resort came to full flower, the good people of the County were going to watch more shocking things than this: they would meet “Rosie” the pig who attended hunt balls and was kissed by all those New York women, and they would watch Mrs. Charles Lanier ride into the Lenox post office astride her pet bull! But Fanny Kemple came at the beginning of the era of the “good” millionaires when an evening of charades was high living enough for a Christian soul, and she cut a wide swathe.
The clergy-men who saw her as a cloud no bigger than a man’s hand had good weather-eyes.

The patron saint of Berkshire litterateurs is Hawthorne. He lived at the head of Stockbridge Bowl in a little barn-colored clapboard house on property adjoining what was to become the site of Shadowbrook and where the Tanglewood Music Festival is presently held.

It is somewhat strange—this cult of Hawthorne in the County. He lived there a short while. His reputation, at least at the present time, is not as lustrous as the native son’s, Melville. It does not even seem provable that he liked the Berkshires, and certainly, except for some brief references in his journals, they do not appear in his writings. The only work he completed while resident there was *The House of the Seven Gables* which reeks the sour, salt tang of Salem, while *Tanglewood Tales* which do preserve the name of his tiny Berkshire property are all about the

Oakwood, the original residence built on the property by Sam Ward. It was somewhat east and north of the site of Shadowbrook, close to the Richmond Road. Part of the building—the wing to the right—survived and was called Campion Cottage by the Jesuit community. Several lay brothers had rooms here. A bakery and tailor shop were located in the basement.
goings-on of gods and heroes in ancient Greece. And yet when the movie *Moby Dick* was shown in Pittsfield last summer, the company strung a banner across the main street, “by Herman Melville, Pittsfield’s own.” For, though it would be hard to find any Pittsfield pedestrian ignorant of the fact that Nathaniel Hawthorne once lived over there in Lenox, there were many, I’ll wager, who found that banner informative.

Hawthorne seems to have been the first to find the view of The Bowl less than exhilarating. He commented once that it was impossible to work with “that outside my window.” This is locally interpreted to mean that his literary efforts were constantly interrupted by time-consuming raptures, but I suspect the correct exegesis is rather that his dark talent found The Bowl’s quiet loveliness a bit of a bore. He has a few nice things about it in his journals: Monument Mountain in October was “a sphinx, wrapped in a Persian shawl.” But there is no hint of Fanny Kemple’s fervor who yearned in England for “the splendid rosy sunsets over the dark blue mountain tops, and for the clear and lovely expanse of waters reflecting both, above all the wild, white-faced streams that come leaping down the steep stairways of the hills.” And one can imagine the dour delight he would have had with the poem read during the Berkshire Jubilee of 1849 (held in joint honor of Mark Hopkins and the Stockbridge and Pittsfield Railroad.)

The Stockbridge Bowl! – Hast ever seen
How sweetly pure and bright,
Its foot of stone, and rim of green
Attract the traveler’s sight?

The self-consciously literary atmosphere and cloying rusticity soon sent Hawthorne back to his coastal marshes, but the Berkshires continue to love him anyway.

The temptation to go on name-dropping must be stoutly resisted for the string of names that could be fashioned out of town histories, old newspapers and back issues of *Country Life* would be a long and brilliant one with diamonds and showy rhinestones interestingly mixed. But the Berkshires as writers’ warren is not our subject, and we shall have to move on. Using
the same unchivalrous stratagem, then, I used to précis the conquest of Catherine Sedgwick, I shall lump together a selection of the greats and not-so-greats without regard for chronology or accomplishment.

At various times the Berkshires have harbored Holmes, Lowell, Emerson and Kate Douglas Wiggins (who gave readings from the manuscript of *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* in parlor B of the Curtis Hotel.). Edith Wharton entertained Henry James in her Lenox mansion. The pulpits of the local churches have been graced by Henry Ward Beecher, Ellery Channing and Charles Parkhurst. Alexis de Tocqueville came up to investigate the phenomenon of authors in the wilderness. Longfellow lived with his wife’s family for a time in Pittsfield. Richard Watson Gilden (the heart of a hero in a poet’s frame), editor of the *Century*, built a villa in Lenox, and Thoreau spent a night in a stone hut on top of Mt. Greylock with rats nibbling his toes. *Basta!*

So the first element, writers, had been generously mixed into the scene. According to Amory’s law of resorts, we should soon begin to notice millionaires.

Among the first were the Higginsons. I cannot tell whether they would fulfill the definition of being “good” millionaires because I do not know whether they were millionaires. Yet,
since they were a Boston banking family, I suppose that much can be presumed, at least if we take into account the relative buying-power of money. I do think it would be difficult to challenge their right to the adjective “good.”

The family was founded by Francis Higginson, a clergyman, who came from England in 1629 to care for the souls engaged in an expedition of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. His son John who wrote the preface to one of Cotton Mather’s works was called “incomparably the best writer among the American Puritan divines.” There were Higginsons in the Revolution, of course, and Francis John and Thomas Wentworth Storrow Higginson both served the Union in the Civil War. Francis was Commander of the Massachusetts; Thomas, colonel of the first colored regiment. Thomas is the most famous of all the Higginsons. He was a Unitarian minister turned soldier and author; his best known book was *Life with a Colored Regiment*, but he also produced biographies, was a respected critic of American letters and discovered Emily Dickinson. Henry Lee Higginson founded, and for a time sustained without the assistance of other backers, the Boston Symphony.

The Higginsons built an attractive farmhouse for vacation living on the side of Baldhead, overlooking The Bowl, immediately adjacent to Hawthorne’s Tanglewood. “Mahkeenac Farm” is still owned today by Lee Higginson, a daughter of the family who married John Gould, a New York lawyer. For about ten years the Goulds have used it as their year-round home.

With the Higginsons we move close to Shadowbrook for their farm is just across the road from the Shadowbrook gatehouse. The neighborly ties between the two estates have always been close. In fact, Anson Stokes purchased the corner of land on which the Shadowbrook gatehouse stands from the Higginson family. The bill of sale has the quaint stipulation that the land is to be used only for a gatehouse; furthermore, should the gatekeeper keep a dog or cat or other quadruped which does prove annoying to the Higginson family, the right of ownership shall be forfeit to these same Higginsons. During recent years the Goulds have collected maple syrup from the trees along the Shadowbrook driveway for which privilege they provided the
Jesuit community with several mornings of properly flavored pancakes.

But at the time the Higginsons built Mahkeenac Farm there was no Shadowbrook. The property was owned by another “good” millionaire, I suppose Amory would call him, though there are, apparently, other possible points of view. He was Mr. Samuel Ward, the “king of lobbyists” and the “sinner” of the recent book, Three Saints and a Sinner.

Sam Ward was certainly one of the most engaging of the dandies who can always be found hanging around, creased, boutonnièred and insouciant, the anteroom of letters. He was the brother of the three well-married sisters, Julia Ward Howe, Louisa Ward Crawford and Anna Ward Bonapart. But Sam did not enter society on his sisters’ coattails (or bustles); for he was on his own hook the personal friend of almost every writer of the American literary beginnings. Emerson addressed his Letter to a Friend to him. (One wonders what Sam really thought of the over-soul!) He had a bottle of rhenish in each pocket for Longfellow the morning he ran into the poet on the streets of Cambridge with which the two Heidelberg cronies toasted their memories of youth. He made and spent three fortunes (one of them in gold-rushed California) with all the grace of a gentleman. He was a patron of the arts whose own art seems to have been the living gesture and in Amory’s context, he was an excellent example of a “good” millionaire.

In 1844 he purchased a tract of land on the open-meadow slopes of Baldhead about two hundred fifty to three hundred feet from the lake and which placed, as it was, in almost dead center of the Baldhead vista, gave a prospect which none of the neighboring estates could match. He built a rambling, gracious mansion of dark wood and named it “Oakswood.”

To Oakswood came all the tasteful people of the East Coast as guests of Sam and the reputation of The Bowl as a landscape unsurpassed grew apace. The Wards played hosts to Jenny Lind and it was their horses she rode on her jaunts to Echo Lake. Despite quite convincing evidence to the contrary, it is still believed by many that she was married in the chapel of Oakswood. It seems, however, very certain now that the marriage took place
in Boston. Yet we know that Sam did maintain a chapel. His wife, originally Protestant, converted to Catholicism, and it was in the chapel of the Wards’ Oakswood that the first Mass in Lenox was celebrated.

By 1890, after fifty years of intense cultivation by the cultivated, the first two stages in the growth of a resort were completed, and the “bad” millionaires had arrived. Acres and acres of unassuming mountains had been purchased by the railroad kings and “robber barons.” “Farms,” turreted, domed, colonnaded, sprawled over the sabine surroundings. “Rosie,” the pet pig, was here.

Anson Stokes, New York banker and railroad owner, bought the Oakswood property in 1892 along with a much larger tract down in the valley, up the eastern slope of Stockbridge Mountain, and across behind the Ward home to the summit of Baldhead. His holdings totaled some fifteen hundred acres. “It is no small thing to own the whole slope of a forest covered mountain from the valley lake up to the very crest,” chirped Country Life. Indeed, it was not, Mr. Stokes agreed, and determined to build no small house.

His original intention was to place his house on the
precipitous side of Stockbridge Mountain facing east. In preparation Stokes planted a lane of elms which still stand – three precise lines of magnificent trees leading through fields and underbrush to the rocky foot of the ridge. But the American fin-de-siecle aristocrat was under the domination of his architects, tyrannous ample-girthed men with heavy gold watch chains and decidedly patrician tastes, according to popular report. Since I have been unable to discover a picture of H. Neill Wilson who was the Lenox architect in charge of designing the Stokes “farm,” I am in no position to dispute the image. Wilson was entranced by the perfection of the view from Baldhead and persuaded his client to build there. The property to the west was to be used for the farm buildings proper.

Oakswood was demolished except for the east wing, and that remains today. We shall throughout the rest of this story refer to this remnant of Sam Ward’s Berkshire interlude by the name it eventually came to bear after the Jesuit invasion, “Campion Cottage.”

With the Ward home properly reduced to the status of gardener’s cottage, Stokes was ready to throw up his own vaunt to
the future. A good deal of blasting was necessary to prepare the ledge selected to receive the structure his architect had conceived. The ledge was about a hundred yards to the west of Oakwood and approximately thirty feet lower. From a promontory it had to be made into a very spacious plateau, for the house was to be over four hundred feet long on the center line. Roughly in the shape of an L, its western wing ran north and south and faced out towards Stockbridge Mountain. This wing bent twice slightly before joining the eastern wing which ran east and west commanding the view. On the extreme eastern end of the eastern wing a short extension running north and south brought the L shape around not quite far enough to form a C, but enough to give the driveway an enclosed aspect.

What shall we say of Mr. H. Neill Wilson’s design? It was eclectic: and that gets us off safely. We must remember that Anson Phelps Stokes was a “bad” millionaire in the Amory scheme of things. He was boisterous, I suppose, certainly pretentious and Mr. Wilson designed a boisterous, pretentious house—whether to please himself or his client, I cannot say. Doubtless to a purist the house was a hopeless mishmash of styles, and purists are not to be gainsaid. I will say, however, that Shadowbrook was a pleasing mishmash, full of hidden surprises, like the carvings high up on ancient cathedrals, and the audacity of the building, its size, its imperious domination of even the surrounding mountains served, I believe, to reduce criticism to niggling. There she stood, like Massachusetts, needing no defense.

There were three towers on Mr. Wilson’s castle. One, a slim pillar of stone finished off the short north-south extension of the eastern wing and met the eye first as one came up the drive. The second was a more massive dunjon, also of stone, and stood commanding The Bowl at the juncture of eastern and western wings. The third was a more modest thing altogether. It was stucco and timbering, a mere two stories high, facing the drive on the inside of the juncture of the two main wings, and it looked in shape and decoration like an immense military drum.

Two dominant styles came together in a shotgun marriage on Wilson’s drawing board: English Tudor timbering and stone. What style stone work I could not say. Generally, the effect was
Norman for its brute mass, but the main entrance facing the drive was topped by a section of stonework which rose beyond the roof and was peaked and buttressed in a decidedly Gothic manner. The first-floor level was faced throughout in stone. Most of the second and third floors were stucco, with outside timbering of charred cypress. Sections of the upper floors overhung the stonework, other sections were recessed. From foot to foot Mr. Wilson kept surprising you. He was an antiquarian inasmuch as there was nothing in his design which was not borrowed from the centuries, but it would be a mistake to think him a fussy antiquarian. He mixed his lore with good brisk stirrings and the result was a huge house whose impact was solid, peculiarly its own, and within its own premises, perfectly valid.

There is, perhaps, less to be said for the interior design. Judging from old photographs, fussiness occasionally ruled inside the house with fine Victorian hand.

One entered under the Gothic peak through huge castle doors into the “pompeian” room in the center of the eastern wing. Square, with wooden grecian pillars and plaster frieze, it had a terrazzo floor, a central fountain and an incongruously huge fireplace of marble before which sprawled a slaughtered tiger. Out the huge windows and through the arches of the porch one could see The Bowl. Off this pompeian reception hall lay two parlors: one to the left was a truly fine piece of work, curved and cornered with gracious opulence. The other was the “morning room”: a conventionally square room, its regular lines were broken by a deep alcove which again overlooked The Bowl and was framed in doric pillars. The ballroom, or “music room” as with suspicious modesty it was called, was truly magnificent. It had a parquet floor of apple wood, walls entirely wainscoted in oak, and a ceiling of quartered oak carved in large whorls. Off the ballroom in the short extension of the eastern wing was a room done in green stained wood used, apparently, to serve refreshments during the balls. The smaller of the two stone towers opened into this room and had within it a stone spiral staircase which ran up to the artist’s studio on the third floor.

Towards the center of the house where the east and west wings joined was the main staircase. It rose from a hall done
in dark walnut paneling, a single flight to a similar hall on the second floor which was half-paneled in walnut. Not much can be said for the effect of this staircase. It was a bulky affair, some ten feet wide, banistered, carved and newel-posted, it made a great to-do about getting up its one flight with three turns and a long landing whose casement windows offered once more, The Bowl; and somehow it seemed to be too ponderously self-conscious to be really pleasing.

No one, however, can cavil at the effect of the dining room. It was a truly beautiful room—oak-paneled, beamed, and with an eighteenth-century fireplace carved of Bavarian black walnut into men-at-arms, horses—a whole crowd of splendid conceits. The upper section of the dining room was a breakfast “nook”. Set in the large lakeward tower, it formed a rounded alcove of beautiful proportions whose three curved picture windows faced east, to the fall of lawn, south, to The Bowl and west, to the sweep of Stockbridge Mountain.

There were two servants’ rooms at the far northern end of the western wing on the second floor, but most of the servants were confined to the small rooms on the third floor of the western wing. The rest of the second and third floors were given over to bedrooms and sitting rooms; eighteen of them on
the second floor, eight on the third. The Stokes’ bedroom was
directly over the dining room and out the windows of the tower
they could wake of a morning to the prospect of The Bowl. The
master’s study was in the room directly above this, and since the
tower at the third-floor level formed an open porch, he could
go out beneath its stone arches and with “opera glass survey his
domain.”

Kitchens and scullery took up the entire first floor of the
western wing. The cavernous cellars hid a large laundry and a
machine which produced acetylene gas “for beautifully illumi-
nating the many rooms.” There was another quite pedestrian
staircase besides the romantic stone spiral in the small tower and
the walnut monster outside the dining room—a servant stairs in
the middle of the western wing. It ran from the cellar to the attic,
turning around an open shaft for an elevator whose principle of
operation was the same as a dumbwaiter’s. In a white-tiled, very
confined shaft beside the front entrance there was a tiny elevator
operated in the usual Otis fashion. It also ran from the cellar
to the attic and communicated the “pompeian” room with the
rooms in the center of the eastern wing. To finish off these last
more pedestrian details we may state that the attic under the
capricious gables and main peaks of the red-tiled roof was left
unfinished.

The Shadowbrook “farmhouse” was completed in 1893
by the builder, James Clifford, of Lenox at the cost of half a
million dollars. Should the masons and woodcarvers exist who
could duplicate it, it could not be done today at seven, ten times
the price. H. Neill Wilson with titanic (get it?) pride stated that it
would last for centuries, and at its completion it was, reportedly,
the largest private residence in America—a report, no doubt, that
gave some satisfaction to its owner.

Of course, the property was not equipped as a “farm”
without farm buildings. Down in the valley beside the lanes
of elms where originally he intended to build his home, Stokes
constructed his farm: two stables each accommodating twenty
horses, three cottages, a cow barn, a tool barn, a horse barn, a
hay barn, a chicken house, a duck pen, a carpentry shop, a black-
smith’s shop, a large ice house, a dairy, a boat house on the lake,
a few sheds for wagons and tools, and assorted out-buildings, all finished in a golden-gray stucco with high-peaked low-dipping roofs and outside timbering. Alas for Mr. Wilson's efforts, it was his designs for the farm buildings that won praise from Professor Capper of London who rather cruelly ignored the mansion to call the barns and shops "the most important piece of American architecture so far." This gracious group of buildings was later converted into a home and the Stokes family still lives there. Canon Stokes wrote his important study on the relations of Church and State in the high-ceiled, dark stained library which was once his father's ice house.

For unfortunately old Anson did not long enjoy his Shadowbrook. It was not financial failure which caused him to sell it, but a personal tragedy.

In the western part of the property where the merging of Baldhead and Stockbridge Mountains form the rounded north-west curve of The Bowl, there is a small brook. It runs over rocks beneath pines which to the very life "stand like druids of old, bearded with moss" in their own perpetual twilight. It was named "Shadowbrook" by no less a phrase-maker than Hawthorne himself, and the name was eagerly appropriated for the estate. One day, while riding with his daughter out by the brook, Stokes' bay stepped in a hornet's nest and plunged ahead out of control, collided with a tree and crushed the leg of its rider. His daughter rode to the house for help and Mr. Stokes was carried back beneath his towers. The leg had to be amputated, and during the long month of convalescence, lying in the second floor tower room, Stokes found that his pleasure in the house had run its course. He left it in 1898 for a new palace in Noroton, Connecticut, where he took up yachting.

From 1898 to 1906 Shadowbrook was virtually abandoned. It had a brief career in 1901 as a resort hotel on lease from Stokes, but most of the time the vast halls with the slip-covered furnishings stayed pathetically empty. In 1906 it was finally sold to Spencer P. Shotter, a New Orleans planter, who had gone in for finance.

Shotter seems to have assaulted Lenox Society with dismal results. Perhaps his southern drawl was against him, but
all his efforts to be accepted in the East Coast *haut monde* were met by the agonizing chilliness which it is New England’s skill to communicate effectively and without loss of personal dignity. Shotter was also in trouble financially and, perhaps, the captains of industry with the superstition traditional to all who sail rough waters told their wives to “stay away from that fellow Shotter, he’s a jinx.” Whatever the explanation, Spencer P. Shotter’s tenancy, by all reports, could not have been a happy time. When he put the place up for sale in 1912 (only one year after his greatest social triumph, the September Hunt Ball of 1911, which had rated six columns in the old *Berkshire Journal*), the sale price was impounded for deficits in his company, American Naval Stores.

Again the great house stood empty. It was leased by Mrs. Arthur Vanderbilt for nine months in 1915 following her husband’s death, and she spent the time quietly and in mourning.

Finally in 1917 it was sold again, this time to Andrew Carnegie. The gentlest of “robber barons” was now old, and almost crazed with grief over the failure of his peace efforts. He purchased the house, persuaded by his wife and family, who felt he needed something to take him away from the headlines and his obsession with the war. After inspecting the estate, the old man was highly pleased by the terrain, especially the gorse-covered slopes of Baldhead which, he said, reminded him of his boyhood Scotland. And so he bought the estate from Shotter’s debtors for $300,000.

For a few years he found delight in Shadowbrook. He planted rock gardens and tall hedge paths. To the east of the house he installed a pool and fountain. Each day during the summer months he would walk out among his gardens to select his own boutonniere—verbena or heliotrope—for he loved flowers next only to fishing on the lake. He had a high-powered launch built for cruising on the modest Mahkeenac, and enjoyed sitting on its cane bottomed deck chair watching his local guide bait his line and exchanging with him views on life and philosophy.

But the war went on, and its horrors penetrated even this retreat. The power of his millions had accomplished much throughout his life, it had bought him nearly everything he
wanted; but never had he wanted anything as he wanted world peace. He had labored for it, set up conferences, built the Peace Palace in the Hague, spent freely to buy statesmen, politicians, world opinion for the cause of peace; but the world went to war and for three years persisted in war. The old man here in the Berkshires was forgotten. He still cabled to heads of state, querulously demanding negotiations, appeasement, cessation, but his fiat had lost all force, and finally he was broken. In the spring of 1919 he took to his bed. Throughout the early summer months his weary old voice could be heard, calling hourly from the tower bedroom on the second floor, “Wife, has the war stopped yet?” On August 11, at 7:10 in the morning, he died.

The funeral was severely simple, limited to the family and a few close friends. The body lay in state at the western end of the oak ballroom. A small vested choir sang a few of his favorite hymns from beneath the carved fireplace, a short eulogy was preached and the cortege left for the family burying ground in up-state New York.

Lenox, the resort, had fulfilled its course according to Amory’s law; dissolution was upon it. The residents could already see the signs of decay. The artists who had been the indispensable ingredient, for without them Society, at its highest, cannot
maintain itself, were still there. They remain even to today. There is the Academy of the Dance at Jacob’s Pillow, schools of painting and drama still flourish, the distribution of fashionable prep schools has remained generous to the Berkshires, there are a few writers still rejoicing in quiet loveliness of the hills, and, of course, there is Tanglewood. The Berkshire Music Festival was founded by Dr. Serge Koussevitzky, and the Tanglewood concerts alone would be enough to keep the County’s reputation as the home of the artist in good burnish. But by 1920, money, at least in great heavy globs, was moving away.

Courtland Field Bishop is a name which can still lift eyebrows in a gathering of Berkshire people. He secured his right to be called a “bad” millionaire (despite the fact that he played host to Maeterlinck) by assorted high jinks and especially by his last will and testament. He left his fortune to be equally divided between his wife and his mistress on condition that the two ladies (who had never met before, it is said) would live together lovingly until one of them died. An excellent framework for an English murder mystery!

Dr. Bishop in 1920 read the signs of the approaching end of the Lenox resort and delivered himself of an analysis of its causes in the Lenox paper. Courtland Field Bishop will have none of the explanations which looked to a decline in fortunes; there was still plenty of money around. But, he reasons, how can you have a proper resort unless there are gardens; and how he pounces with shattering logic, can you have gardens with Prohibition! “The Italians, like the French, have returned to their old homes for they will not work without their wine.”

Whatever the value of Mr. Bishop’s analysis, it remains incontestably true that he is a contemporary witness who must be listened to with respect, and whatever the cause or causes, it is clear that the death of Carnegie can serve to mark the beginning of the end. Nothing attests this more than the fact that the next purchaser of Shadowbrook in 1922 was the Society of Jesus.