

D-1

File:

Marsh -  
Billings NHP

Woodstock

CONSERVATION HERITAGE SITE  
The Billings Farm, Museum, and Mansion

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Color Scans  
7/21/2004

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WOODSTOCK VILLAGE FROM THE MT TOM OVERLOOK TOWARD BLAKE HILL.



Marsh's book, Man and Nature, has become a classic in the history of conservation. It was published in 1864 the same year that Frederick Law Olmsted was in Yosemite Valley formulating his profound thesis of natural beauty.

Paul Brooks

"The fruit of years of intense research, going back to the time of the Greeks and the Romans, it was the first book, Man and Nature, to consider man as a geological force, a force upsetting what we know today as the balance of nature."

Paul Brooks

Marsh's concern was less with nature's impact on man than with man's impact on nature, and he took not only America but the whole civilized world as his province. His aim was to show that whereas others think that the earth made man, man in fact made the earth.

Paul Brooks

"The earth is becoming an unfit home for its noblest inhabitant."

George Perkins Marsh

What is the use of a house if you haven't a tolerable planet to put it on.

Henry David Thoreau

"Theodore Roosevelt's chief forester Gifford Pinchot called the book "Epoch-Making." In fact, it led directly to the creation of a national forest commission and government reserves.

Paul Brooks

"It is desirable that some large and easily accessible region of American soil should remain as far as possible in its primitive condition, at once a museum for the instruction of the students, a garden for the recreation of the lovers of nature, and an asylum where indigenous trees ..... plants ..... beasts may dwell and perpetuate their kind."

George Perkins Marsh

"Marsh's book; "Man and Nature," was the fountainhead of the conservation movement."

Lewis Mumford

By 1958, he, Lawrence Rockefeller, was a Commissioner of Palisades Park, a Director of the Hudson River Conservation Society and the New York Zoological Society, as well as Director of Resources for the Future.

Peter Collier  
David Urowitz

In some sense conservation had been a natural area for him (Lawrence Rockefeller) to expand into, not only because of his fathers long identification with that cause, but also it was a field that had touched on so many sensitive areas that it was obviously destined to play a significant role in the future life of the nation.

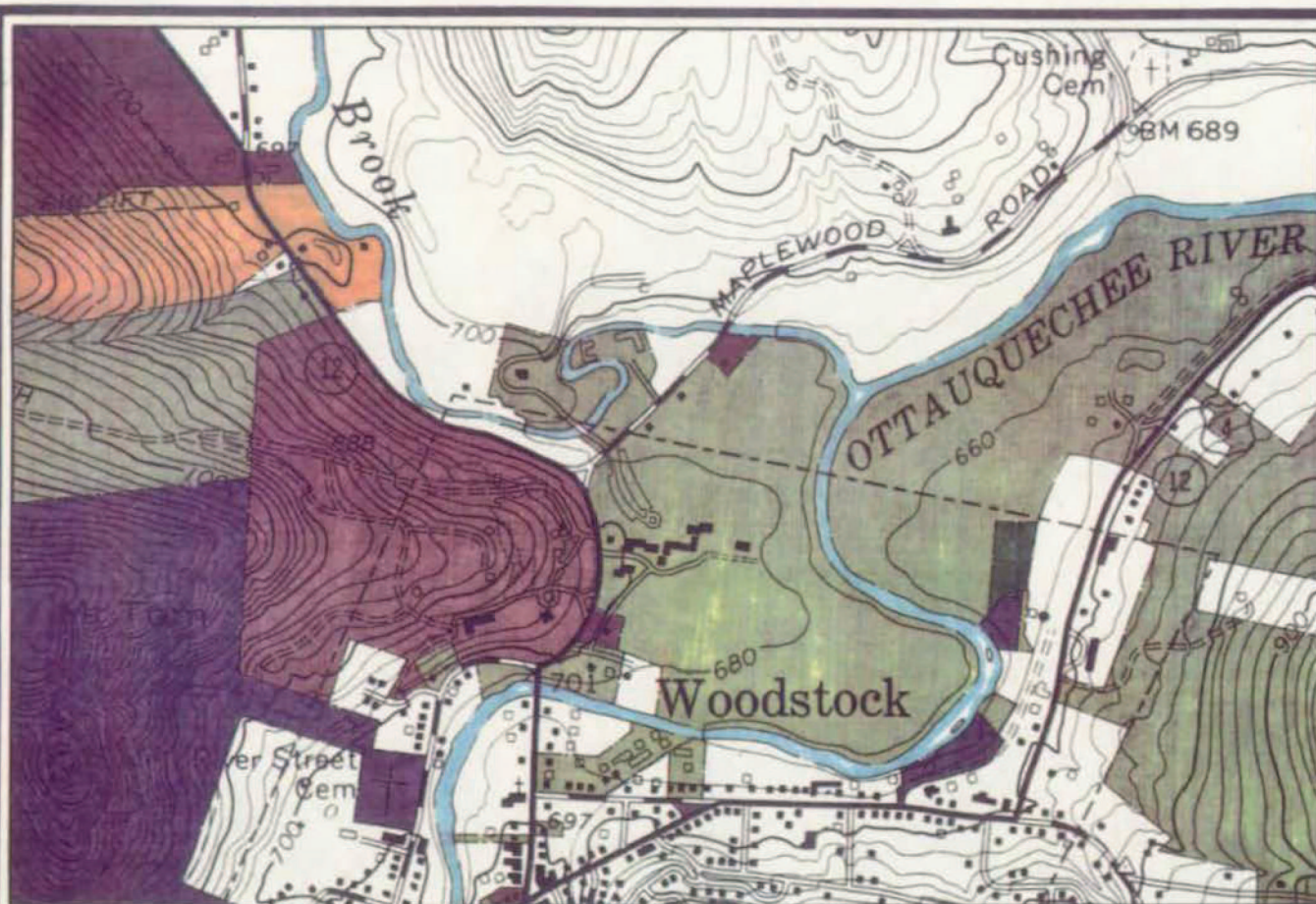
Peter Collier  
David Urowitz





VIEW OVER WOODSTOCK COMMONS. THE WOODSTOCK INN IS THE LARGE BUILDING IN THE RIGHT UPPER POSITION.





#### OWNERSHIP

■ LAURANCE S. ROCKEFELLER

■ WOODSTOCK RESORT CORP

■ RIGHTS OF FIRST REFUSAL

■ MARY F. ROCKEFELLER

■ WOODROCK INC.

■ PUBLIC LANDS

PROPERTY STUDY  
WOODSTOCK, VERMONT

APRIL 1990



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456/20000



## MARSH-BILLINGS MANSION/BILLINGS FARM AND MUSEUM

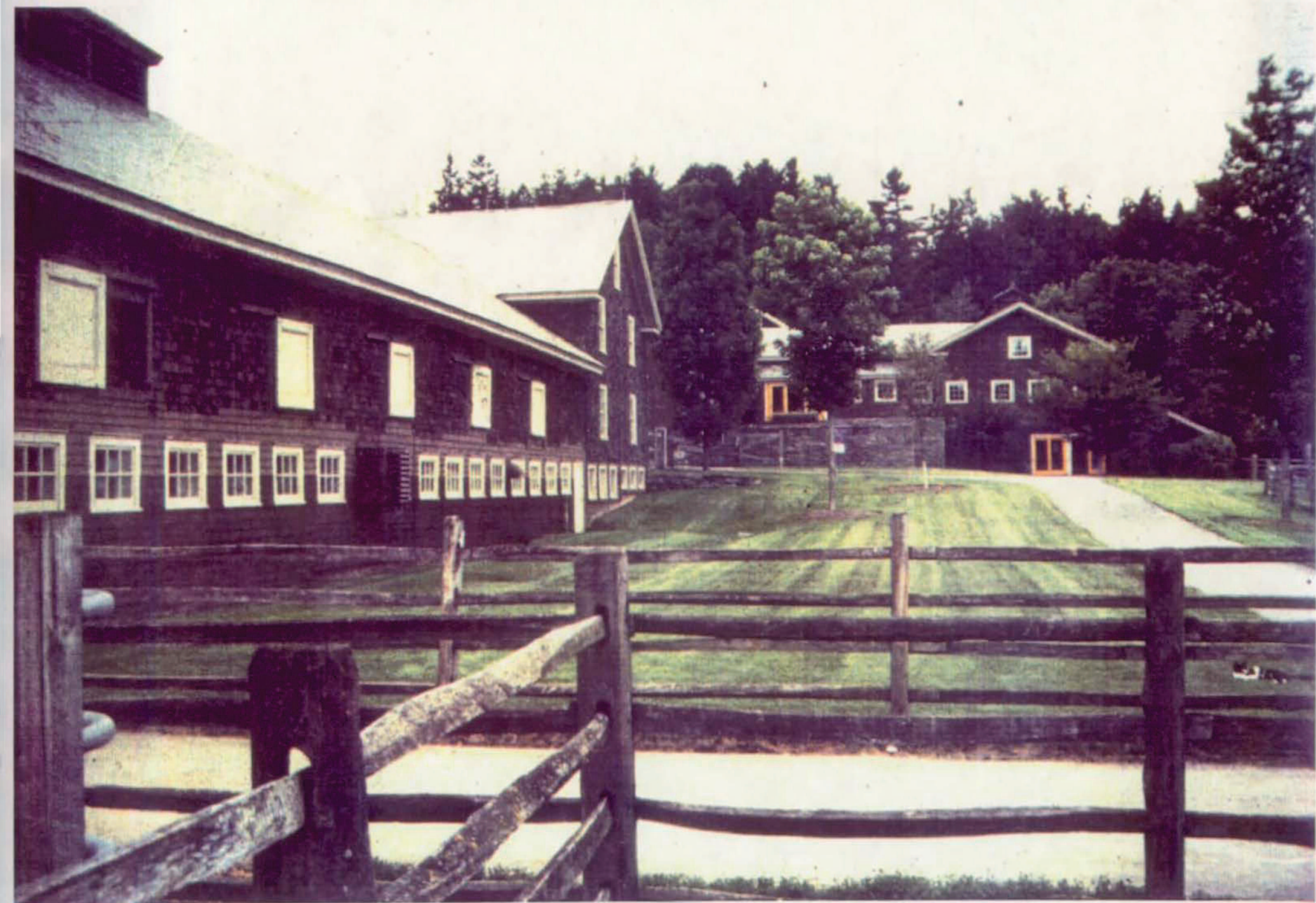
### THE LEGISLATIVE APPROACH VS. NEW AREA STUDY

Typically a new area study (Study of Alternatives) provides information to the agency and to congress on the following:

1. The areas significance
2. Threats to the area
3. Sensitive areas
4. Public needs and concerns
5. Current plans to protect the area
6. Feasible alternatives for preservation and use
7. Impacts of alternatives

An examination of the above topics discussed on a PRO/CON basis is discussed case by case

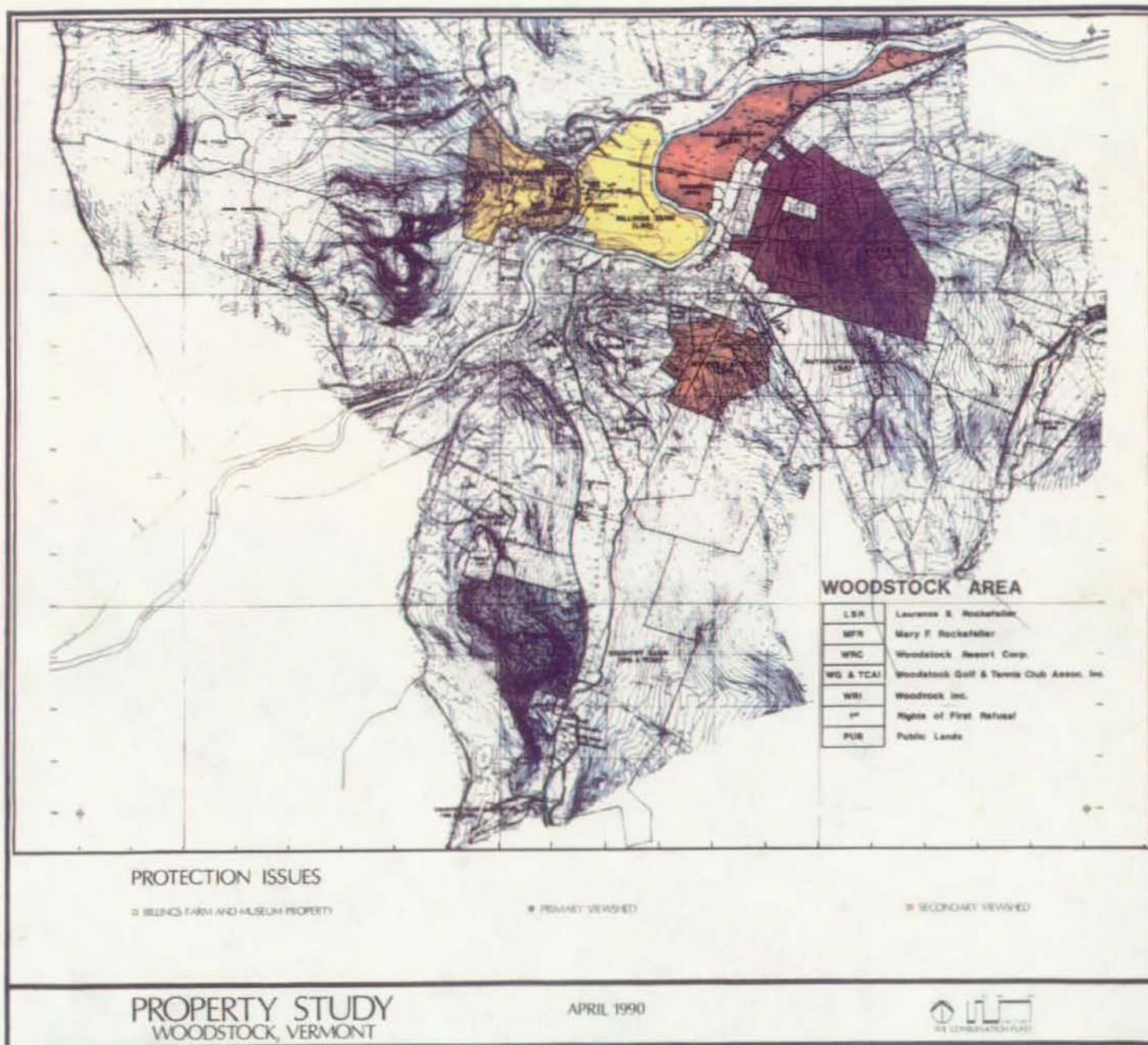
THE AREAS SIGNIFICANCE		
PRO	CON	LEGISLATIVE/NEW AREA STUDY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Established as National Historic Landmark 6/11/67.</li><li>- Marsh/Billings/Rockefeller are recognized figures in 19th and 20th century U.S. conservation history.</li><li>- Recent memos NPS Cultural Resource Division concur with significance and potential NP role.</li><li>- Special report for Assistant Director Planning and Development concurs strongly with the areas national significance.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Arguments to the contrary related to the areas significance would be overwhelmed by the evidence and testimonials available.</li><li>- How much of the original Marsh Mansion remains is an unanswered question at this point.</li><li>- The significance of George Perkins Marsh in relation to the modern ecological movement needs interpretation.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The exercise of performing a new area study would do little to add or dissuade from the question of significance.</li><li>- The evidence to substantiate national significance is overwhelming.</li><li>- A new area study will have little impact or value concerning the area as significant.</li><li>- The main figures are nationally prominent and the site and its objects possess substantial integrity.</li></ul>



THE BILLINGS FARM MUSEUM ON THE RIGHT. THE BARN IS ON THE LEFT



THREATS TO THE AREA		
PRO	CON	LEGISLATIVE/NEW AREA STORY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The farm and mansion are exemplary historical artifacts on a New England cultural landscape. The area possesses substantial integrity. It displays outstanding results of careful planning and design decisions. Faithful adherence to the historic architecture, historic landscape tastefully developed facilities for visitor use and interpretation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This issue was investigated in August of 1990 and discussed with Rockefeller people. The principal resources are secure and no imminent threats are known at this point.</li> <li>- There is concern related to the management continuity of the farm and mansion. Laurance Rockefeller is the guiding force that prevailed over the preservation program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The value of a new area study to identify potential threats is of limited value. Over the years good decisions have embellished the resource in questions of design and landscape protection and management.</li> <li>- A new area study might flush out other threats. This however would seem doubtful at this point.</li> </ul>
SENSITIVE AREAS		
PRO	CON	LEGISLATIVE/STUDY APPROACH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If NPS management is a serious prospect there are questions as to what lands would be acquired or donated beyond the conservation fund maps of 1990 described as the historic core. 4/90. The core lands house the mansion, farm buildings, museum, administrative offices, stables, corrals, managers residence, pasturage, ice house, etc.</li> </ul> <p>Beyond the core, we need to identify NPS interests in what is defined as primary and secondary viewshed lands i.e. Bailey Meadow, Blake Hill, and Mt Reg. also owned by Laurance S. Rockefeller. Also the Richard Billings house and property occupied by the museum staff, just north of the farm and mansion has a strategic and operational relationship to the historic core.</p> <p>Mt. Tom, an important landmark, is a prominent feature, bearing a strong relationship to the sites conservation history. The property is contiguous to the historic core, it contains a reservoir, carriage roads and woodlands.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Base maps are available that display ownership patterns, core historic sites and primary and secondary viewshed lands. NPS interests in particular related to fee title, and less than fee interests, cooperative agreements need to be identified by NPS and the Rockefeller interests.</li> </ul> <p>A study would allow some more specificity in identifying protection issues in relation to surrounding properties.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Without a new area study legislation must specify authority to enter into cooperative agreements in respect to the surrounding landscape context where changes in landscape would adversely affect the parks integrity. Such authority could be inserted into the enabling legislation for the site, and subject to the detailed recommendations of the general management plan.</li> </ul> <p>An analysis does exist in mappable form that identifies areas.</p>



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PUBLIC NEEDS AND CONCERNS		
PRO	CON	LEGISLATIVE/NEW AREA
<p><u>New Area Study</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Although such studies provide opportunity for public input, usually such studies limit these to two or three windows.</li> <li>- Land acquisition is not envisioned limiting any controversy involving purchase or condemnation.</li> <li>- Transfer of ownership from Rockefeller to the NPS will inspire questions and possibly heated debate.</li> <li>- Legislation, without a study, may result in the loss of some public input to some issues.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Woodstock Foundation through its consultants could initiate a public relations/educational program to discuss alternative management solutions and the reasoning for such possibilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The transfer of properties from Rockefeller ownership and management to other institutions could provoke some anxieties within the Woodstock community.</li> <li>- At this point is unknown to us               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. if other institutions are being considered besides NPS.</li> <li>2. to what extent these possible changes are known to the Woodstock community.</li> <li>3. if an actual program is in the works to properly announce future prospects.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
CURRENT PLANS TO PROTECT THE AREA		
PRO	CON	LEGISLATIVE/NEW AREA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Through the efforts of the Billings and Rockefeller interests the goal to preserve the Billings property -- including the mansion, the farm, and the surrounding forests and fields - at the approximate scope and extent that existed during the time of Frederick Billings has evolved into a showcase 1890 farmstead.</li> </ul> <p>Included are the farm operation cultivated fields, pasturage, woodlots, Champion Jersey dairy herd, historic farm managers house, upper barns, museum, administrative facilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Billings-Marsh Mansion is currently occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Rockefeller.</li> </ul> <p>The mansion, surroundings and furnishings are of national significance - Its architecture decorative arts and in U.S. conservation and land use history. Historically significant residents as occupants. Grounds, gardens, belvedere carriage barn, carriage collection, bungalow cottages, carriage roads are essential elements of the setting. The adjacent forests are significant in the land use and conservation history of the site.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Billings Marsh Mansion could be the first important step in an operational role for NPS. The first measure for NPS is to start a GMP/DCP to identify use, and protection of the mansion. Such a program would focus on the mansion's conversion from a private home to a public facility. Important functional and interpretive relationships with the farm would be established.</li> </ul> <p>A long range planning study written by the Billings Farm and Museum Director has outlined steps to accomplish the use of the mansion as a public facility.</p>
FEASIBLE ALTERNATIVES FOR PRESERVATION AND USE		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Five alternatives have been identified and are included under management/legislative alternatives in Appendix J.</li> </ul>		





THE HISTORIC MARSH-BILLINGS MANSION. BOYHOOD HOME OF GEORGE PERKINS MARSH, LATER BECAME  
THE HOME OF FREDERICK BILLINGS AND MARY & LAURANCE ROCKEFELLER.

# IMPACTS OF ALTERNATIVES

ALTERNATIVE	IMPACT
1. Continuation of existing institutions	<p>Woodstock foundation restructures to assume a more role in daily management of farm and museum.</p> <p>Operational continuity and adherence to established objectives will depend on the interests of board members. The absence of law could result in the departure from what exists today to a more commercial program.</p>
2. Expand role of local/state institutions	<p>Woodstock Foundation changes from a local endowment arm only to expand into management of the facilities. Management would be subjected to the discretion of the board.</p> <p>States willingness or financial ability to assume responsibility unknown.</p>
3. Federal turnkey approach	<p>NPS responsible for technical assistance, staff and funding, to ready the mansion for visitor use. After 6 years, evaluate 3 prospects for the future.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Turnkey NPS operation to foundation or other.</li> <li>2. NPS assumes permanent responsibility for operation of mansion</li> <li>3. NPS additionally expands operational responsibility for the Billings Farm and Museum.</li> </ol>
4. NPS management of mansion, farm and museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Designate overall complex as a National Historic Site (NHS).</li> <li>- NPS ownership of entire site.</li> <li>- NPS staffs mansion.</li> <li>- Woodstock Foundation operates the Billings Farm and Museum.</li> <li>- Sales, membership fees, donations and an endowment fund the operation of the museum and farm.</li> </ul>
5. New England Conservation Heritage Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Alternative 5 places a program emphasis on the nationwide contributions of New Englands writers, artists and philosophers that helped share the American conservation ethic.</li> <li>- Karsh, Billings and Rockefeller highlighted for 200 years of exemplary conservation stewardship.</li> <li>- Marsh highlighted for contributions to the modern global ecological concern.</li> <li>- Intra regional programmatic approaches celebrate New Englands influences in the 19th century in the evolution of conservation. (i.e. Caitlin, Emerson, Thoreau, Olmstead through interpretive media, tours and cooperative agreements with universities and other institutions.</li> </ul>



**PROPOSED LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS**  
**FOR THE**  
**BILLINGS MARSH MANSION/BILLINGS FARM AND MUSEUM**

**BOUNDARY CONSIDERATIONS:**

In the event legislation authorizes a role for the National Park Service (NPS), our interest in those properties to be managed must be identified by including a map, for which land would be donated, transferred, or acquired in some manner in fee or less than fee interests. At a minimum the NPS interest in direct ownership would include the following described as the core historic properties:

- Billings Farm, Laurance S. Rockefeller
- Billings Mansion Estate, Mary F. Rockefeller

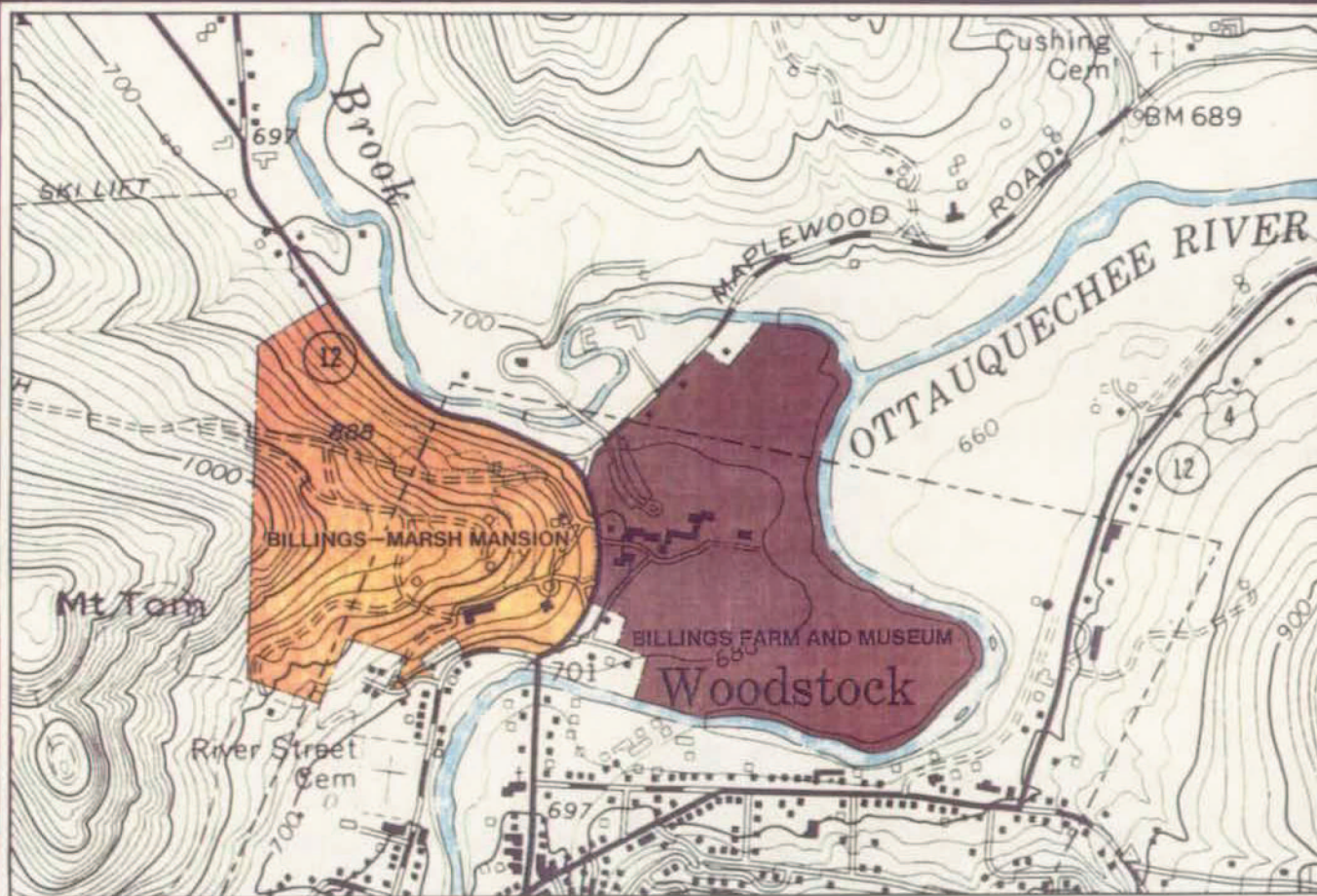
The above properties are the primary resources of national significance.

Direct ownership options are also sought for the wetland unit across the Ottawaquechee River known as Bailey Meadow (Laurance S. Rockefeller). The Billings Farm has a direct common boundary relationship with the river, the farm and the meadow.

Immediately north of the farm and mansion site at the junction of Route 12 and the Maplewood Road is the property described as the Richard Billings Estate, presently housing administrative and support facilities for the museum. It contains staff offices, library and archives, and collections storage. The R. Billings property is essential to the proposed opening of the mansion for public use. It has potential to develop visitor services, parking and shuttle mini buses, in order to preserve the mansion grounds in their historical context.

Mount Tom is another strategic parcel of major importance. It consists of an elongated parcel immediately <sup>west</sup> east of the Billings Mansion abutting the mansion grounds and the high precipitous public lands that protect a system of trails, carriage road and the natural environment behind the mansion.

Mount Tom, originally owned by the father of George Perkins Marsh is the site thought important to Marsh's basic education as a geographer/naturalist. The mountain, was devastated by fire one year before Marsh's birth. Here George, observed the impacts of a devastated landscape. The mountains rocky summit was barren. Vegetation could not become re-established. Struggling tiny saplings lacking nourishment died. Every rain continued to wash away, the top soil from the scorched mountainside. The Marsh property and excessive grazing and timber cutting throughout New England were important to Marsh's thesis. Mount Tom also contains a hidden upland lake known as, the Pogue, and high ground affording grand views of Woodstock and the Ottawaquechee Valley. Frederick Billings, reforested Mount Tom, at the time he was expanding the Marsh Farm. Billings set out thousands of Pines, Spruces and Larches to reclaim the devastated mountain land.



HISTORIC CORE

PROPERTY STUDY  
WOODSTOCK, VERMONT

APRIL 1990



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## **RECOMMENDATION:**

As part of this preliminary analysis, the properties described above would give NPS a viable operational unit of high integrity. Given the knowledge of the occupants and events, associated with the people and the site, a newly designated NPS unit should include all of the above.

## **OTHER INTEREST LANDS:**

Immediately east of the site, there exists two large parcels (Rockefeller holdings) described as primary and secondary viewshed lands. Blake Hill is a prominent ridge, opposite the farm and mansion. The holding consists of open pasture at the valleys floor to steeply covered wooded slopes. Protection of the viewshed is an issue. It is part of the landscape context that give the mansion its 19th century aura. It should be protected through donation, acquisition or the specification of particular zoning or land use practices. i.e. density, and minimal vegetative clearings/lot size.

## **LANDS:**

Legislative provisions should include the ability to acquire lands, through donation, gifts, etc directly related to the Billings Marsh Mansion, Billings Farm and Museum, Mount Tom properties, Richard Billings Estate, and Bailey Meadow.

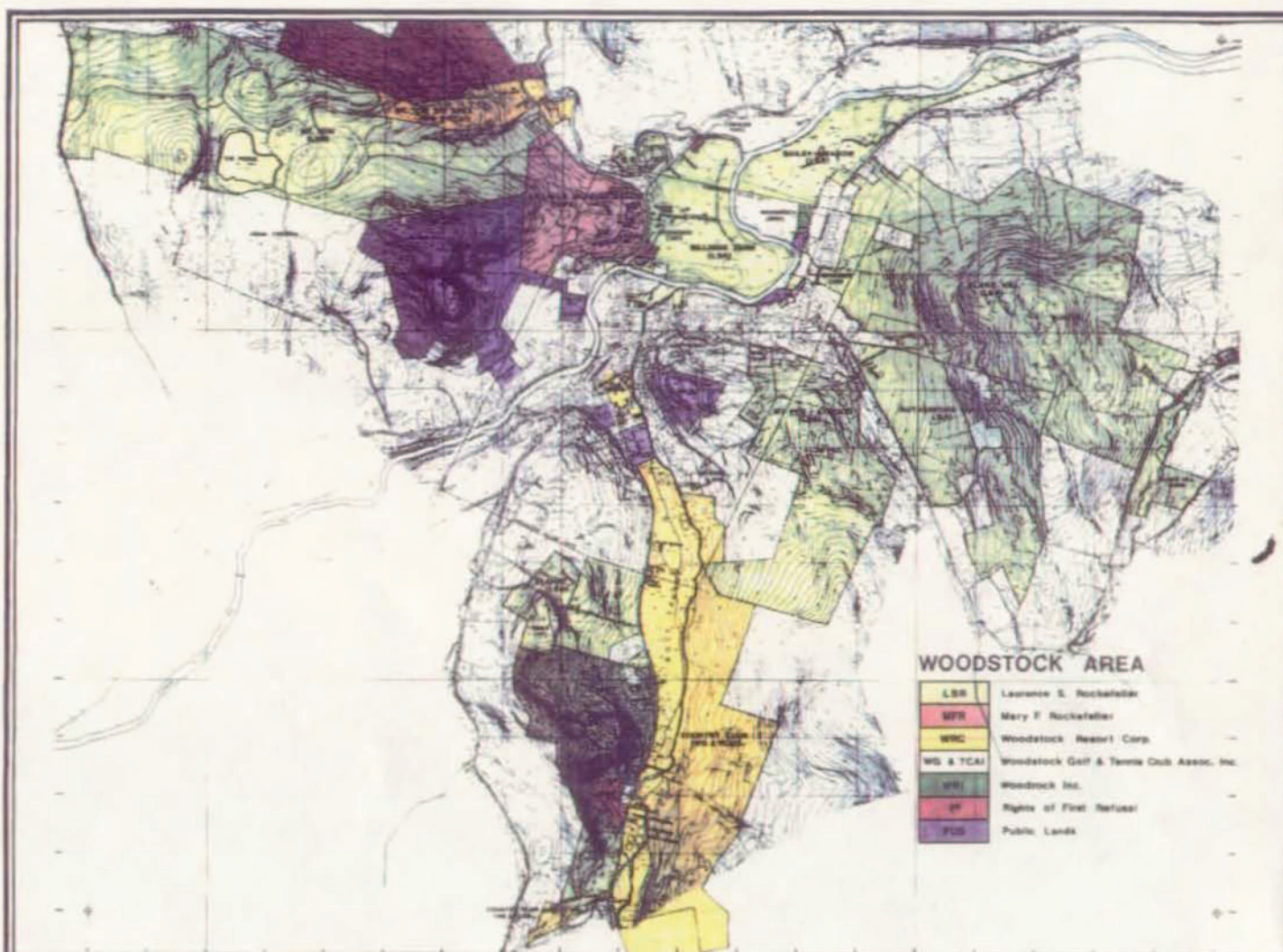
- Ability to establish cooperative agreement with public, private institutions to accept donation in fee or other interests in lands in the interest of protecting the cultural landscape. NPS should seek rights of first refusal for any lands connected with core historic properties including of properties abutting the mansion and far.

## **OPERATIONS:**

Ability to accept donated monies endowments or other cooperative arrangements to fund elements of the operation for staff, facilities, interpretation maintenance and outreach programs. Outreach programs in the sense of reinforcement of the themes related to the sites unique national significance. Such agreements could include state institutions, other federal, universities, Woodstock Foundation in relationship to the sites contracts. Conservation heritage contracts with other public private institution for maintenance service avoiding publicity costs should also be permitted under the legislative provisions.

## **INTERPRETATION:**

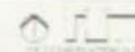
Legislative authorization would specify the continued use of the Billings Farm and Museum as a cultural landscape and Vermont rural folklike museum, maintaining the livestock barns, out buildings, farm managers house, management of library and archives, and collection storage. Continue to utilize a volunteers in parks program to supplement/support citizen expertise and manpower shortfalls.



OWNERSHIP

PROPERTY STUDY  
WOODSTOCK, VERMONT

APRIL 1990



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### CITIZEN PARTICIPATION:

Legislative potential to create a citizens commission to serve as a forum for information exchange, give advice, community involvement and leadership.

### WHAT ARE THE UNRESOLVED ISSUES?

1. Do we know for sure if legislation is being prepared or are the, Rockefeller interest exploring other administrative arrangements?
2. Just what interests would NPS acquire? Properties? Furnishings, endowments?
3. What interests would be donated? Acquired? Core historic properties, other lands held in title by Rockefeller interests?
4. Would legislation contain any special provisions?
5. We need to know the disposition of the art collection that exists in the mansion? Does NPS prepare to care house and interpret the collection - particularly the collection improperly housed in the mansions attic.
6. Do we retain existing staff? What is the disposition of the museum people? Five operating divisions run the farm, museum and mansion presently.
7. The public relations issue. If NPS assumes responsibilities how best to manage the transition with respect to the public.
8. Legislative versus new area study; which approach?



"TAKE OUT"



## STUDY OF ALTERNATIVES

### Billings, Marsh, Rockefeller Mansion/Billings Farm and Museum

The enclosed brochure entitled "Criteria for Parklands" includes criteria for evaluating new parklands and outlines the study process to determine an areas significance. Such a process typically involves intensive coordination and consultations with others, citizens, local, state, federal and private interests. In some cases a brief assessment of resources may be employed but more thorough studies usually require funding from congress<sup>or</sup> private sources.

#### SCOPING

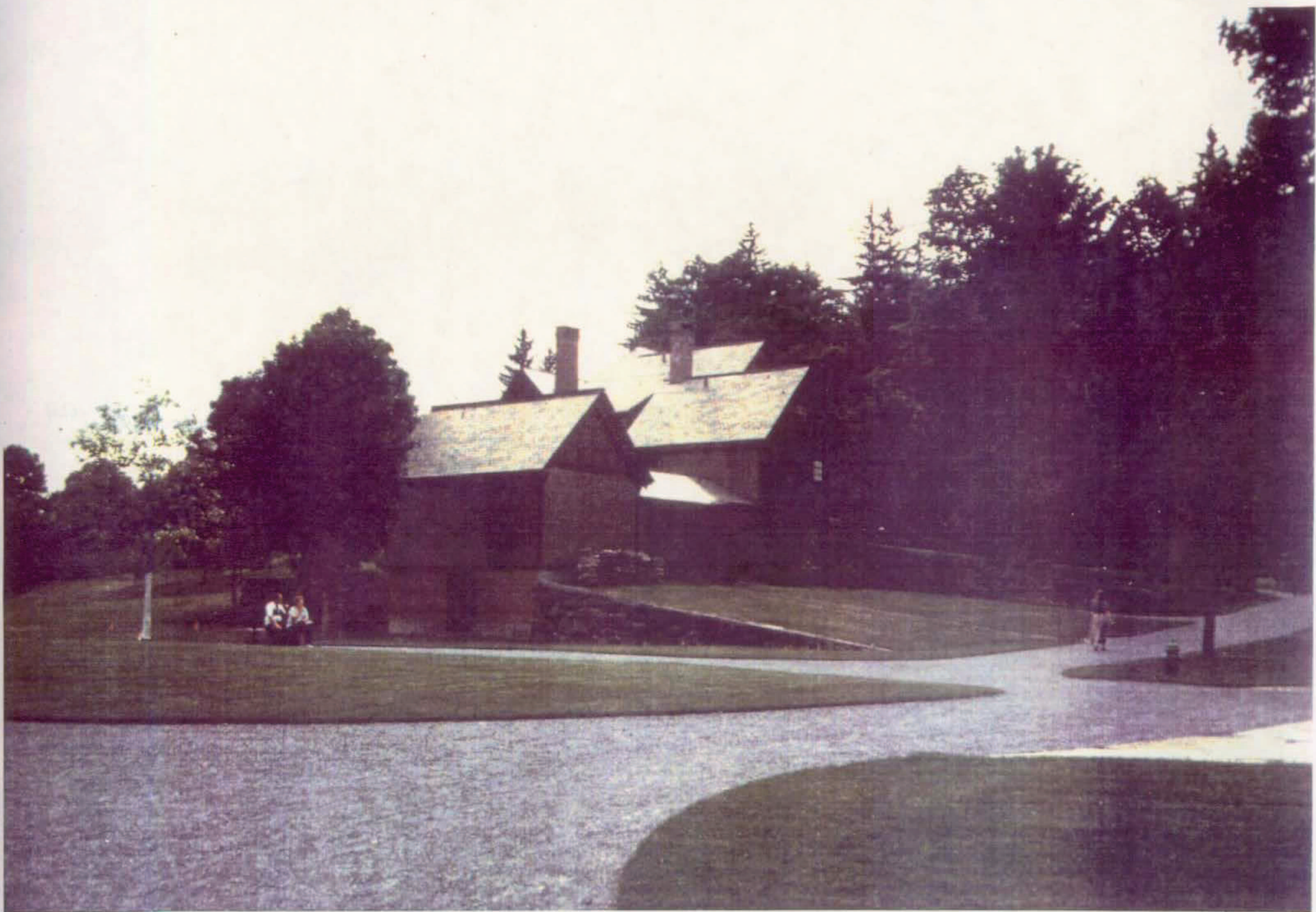
Several important components are part of most studies. In National Park Service (NPS) procedures, the first step requires consultation with all interested parties. At this point the scope of work, report format and level of public involvement is determined given the kind of issues, public interest raised, resource and management questions to be addressed. This scoping process is a "critical" first step to establish a credible beginning. At this time the study team is busy making contacts, explaining the study process, gathering <sup>new</sup> contacts, finding local subject area experts, soliciting suggestions of others that could assist the work of the team as part of a working partnership of the area. This is a critical time for handling potential misunderstandings concerning the nature of the study. At this crucial point the scope, content, team composition, and degree of public involvement may be realistically established.

#### DATA GATHERING

Gathering the areas relevant data is essential to build the studies factual base. For the Mansion and Billings Farm complex, considerable source information exists to establish a good data base. Such data is important to understand the areas significance, the integrity of its natural and cultural systems overall resource evaluations that may become a basis for legislative authorization that identify management and operations solutions. In a preliminary assessment of available data at the mansion and farm much data exists that will shorten this phase of work. This section would contain maps of the areas historic and natural resources, circulation patterns, and other information. Consultants may be employed to facilitate this phase, several are engaged in work at this time. Doug Horne of the conservation fund; ownership and land use. Also, Robin Winks is writing a book, due for release soon, on the significance of the Billings, Marsh, Rockefeller Mansion and Farm.

#### EVALUATION

This section is usually interpretive in nature and summarizes the significance of the site(s). It contains an evaluation of the areas national significance. Contributions of those associated with events significant in the history of the United States are examined. The section would examine architectural merits, meanings and other distinctive attributes of the site. The collective relationship of sites, both individually and in comprehensive associations commemorating the sites's integrity, sense of place, or cultural significance are other issues to be examined. The section would explore the areas suitability for inclusion in the national park system and look at the similarities and differences found elsewhere if any. New units are examined as well in terms



BILLINGS FARM MANAGERS RESIDENCE & CREAMERY FAIRLY RESTORED TO ITS 1890 CONDITION



of feasibility. To be feasible an area must be of sufficient size and configuration to ensure long term protection, accommodate public use. it must have potential for efficient administration at reasonable cost.

### **THREATS**

This section of the report will list any potential threats that may harm or impair the resource integrity. New development, highway construction, or other major facilities development is explored to reveal the nature and extent of the threat that would in some way alter or degrade the quality(ies) of the area. Change in status or ownership of individuals, may constitute a serious threat to an areas cultural or natural integrity. Management continuity in sympathy with the objectives established by Marsh, Billings and the Rockefellers is a matter of concern.

### **MANAGEMENT OPTIONS**

The most essential component of the study besides the areas significance, is feasible alternatives for management. This section will examine feasible alternatives for the protection and use of the Billings Farm and Mansion. Management alternatives will explore the feasibility of local/regional administration, state administration, federal and private quasi public administration. The feasibility of extending the role of existing institutions would be examined. There is need to examine how a combined arrangement of institutions would work in partnership to manage the farm and mansion.

### **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

Experience clearly demonstrates that proposals to create federal land managing entities in New England has generated intense public interest. Self determination, home rule, town meetings and conservatism are characteristic of the New England political atmosphere. There are no federal (NPS) sites in Vermont and only one in New Hampshire outside of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. Local and state interest will require frequent access to the study team. Team travel will be extensive and require frequent preparation of study drafts and other issue related maps, monographs, and related materials.

### **REPORT PUBLICATION AND DISTRIBUTION**

Publication of final study of alternatives  
Document edited and finished graphics  
Anticipated copies for public distribution 3,000

### **TEAM COMPOSITION**

Team composition should consist of seasoned professionals with the following backgrounds:

Community Planner

Historian

Landscape Architect

Social Scientists

Consultants (as required, that are grounded in specific knowledge with the sites under study)

# STUDY COSTS BY TOPIC

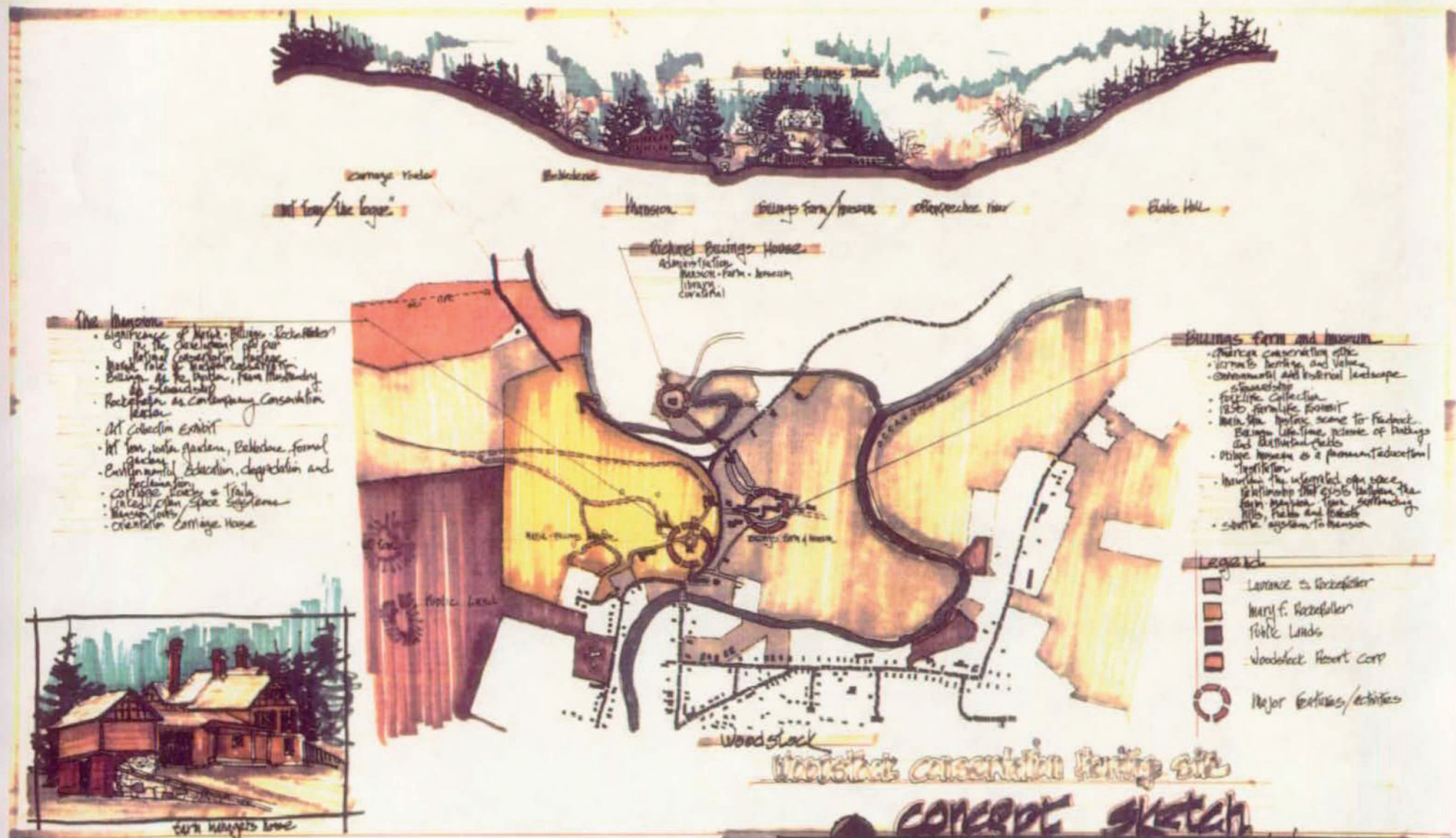
	Range of Costs	
	LOW	HIGH
Scoping	\$12,000	\$15,000
Data Gathering	\$14,000	\$18,000
Evaluation	\$ 8,000	\$12,000
Threats	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000
Management Options	\$10,000	\$12,000
Public Involvement	\$15,000	\$22,000
Report Publication & Distribution	<u>\$12,000</u>	<u>\$15,000</u>
TOTAL	\$74,000	\$97,000





BILLINGS FARM PASTURES WITH COUNTRY LANE ACCESS.







**APPENDIX**

**THE BILLINGS FARM AND MUSEUM/ROCKEFELLER MANSION  
WOODSTOCK, VERMONT: A SPECIAL REPORT**

August, 1990

Prepared by: Richard V. Giamberdine  
Senior Landscape Architect

Ronald W. Johnson  
Supervisory Planner



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Associate Director Denis Galvin requested a preliminary evaluation of several properties owned, managed, and funded by Laurance S. Rockefeller in Woodstock, Vermont. The Rockefeller Mansion (known as the George Perkins Marsh Boyhood Home National Historic Landmark (NHL) is nationally significant. The adjacent Billings Farm and Museum is a professionally managed cultural facility that interprets Vermont hill country agricultural history. The Special Report contains several recommendations concerning future management and operation of these resources including possible roles for the National Park Service (NPS). The report identifies five alternatives including: 1. Continuation of Existing Institutions; 2. Expand Role of Local/State Institutions; 3. Federal Turnkey Approach; 4. NPS Management of Mansion, Farm, and Museum; and 5. New England Conservation Heritage Project.



Marsh's book, Man and Nature, has become a classic in the history of conservation. It was published in 1864 the same year that Frederick Law Olmsted was in Yosemite Valley formulating his profound thesis of natural beauty.

Paul Brooks

Purchasing the Marsh property was both a wish fulfillment and a significant link in Frederick's (Billings) lasting admiration of George Perkins Marsh, whose pioneering work, Man and Nature, published in 1864 while Marsh was Minister to Italy, established the fundamental principles of conservation and to this day remains the ecologists bible.

Jane Curtis et.al.

In some sense conservation had been a natural area for him (Lawrence Rockefeller) to expand into, not only because of his father's long identification with that cause, but also it was a field that had touched on so many sensitive areas that it was obviously destined to play a significant role in the future life of the nation.

Peter Collier  
David Urowitz

## **THE BILLINGS FARM AND MUSEUM/ROCKEFELLER MANSION WOODSTOCK, VERMONT: A SPECIAL REPORT**

### **INTRODUCTION**

At the request of Associate Director, Planning and Development, Denis Galvin in mid-June, Senior Landscape Architect Rich Giamberdine and Supervisory Planner Ron Johnson from the Denver Service Center (DSC) traveled to Woodstock, Vermont on July 23-27 to inspect several properties owned, managed, and funded by Laurance S. Rockefeller. The Associate Director asked for a preliminary professional opinion of the resources as well as recommendations concerning future management and operation of the site including a possible role for the National Park Service (NPS).

These resources include the Billings Farm and Museum as well as Mr. and Mrs. Rockefeller's Woodstock estate overlooking the town of Woodstock in the Ottauquechee Valley. The museum (approximately 10 acres) in operation since 1983 interprets Vermont hill country farm life as well as the restored 1890 farm manager's residence and creamery. It is modelled after similar country estates found in England as well as Carter's Grove, an auxiliary property managed by Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia. The museum is open six months annually. It contains numerous Vermont farm life exhibits interpreting the 1890 period, a Vermont folklife collection, and a library/archives for research purposes. An operating (190 acre) dairy farm featuring championship Jersey cattle is heavily subsidized by Mr. Rockefeller. The facilities attracted 45,000 visitors in 1989. Directly across Vermont highway 12 the mansion and 40 acres used privately by the Rockefellers as a rural retreat, nestles at the foot of Mount Tom. These various cultural resource and landscape components combine to form a synergistic entity reflecting significance, integrity, feasibility, and suitability for possible National Park Service activity.

### **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The appearance of Woodstock has remained attractive and has been described as the quintessence of New England. Substantial houses cluster around tree shaded yards and the historic commons. Stone, brick, and clapboard federal, victorian, and classically-styled residential, religious, and commercial structures reflect continuing interest and pride in this village of 3,000 inhabitants. Outbuildings such as barns, sheds, and carriage houses, specimen trees and shrubs, picket fences, fieldstone walls, wrought iron fixtures, brick or bluestone paving accentuate the visual appeal of Woodstock's cultural landscape.

The village nestles between wooded rolling hills with Mount Tom and Blake Hill framing the east/west borders. The Ottauquechee River meanders through the open fields and marshes of the Billings Farm and Museum adjacent to Woodstock's northern outskirts. The river crossings consist of an historic iron truss bridge on Elm Street as well as two wooden covered bridges, one near the village commons, the other four miles north of Woodstock.

The farm and mansion are afforded excellent landscape protection. Lands that abut the farm and mansion consist of other Rockefeller properties or public open space. The sightlines from the mansion's porches and windows are also protected with a view of the Billings Farm and Museum buildings and pastures. The high ground across the river to the east also consists of Rockefeller holdings. The landscape context and adjacent ownership allows the setting to reflect high integrity and



renders a convincing historic scene for the mansion and farm. A few small inholdings adjoin the farm and mansion where the Rockefeller interests have right of first refusal. Both farm and mansion benefit from the implementation of excellent planning and design decisions. The core historic fabric is a convincing 19th century scene. Twentieth century additions to accommodate public use on the farm are executed in a tastefully understated manner. Design, maintenance, and operation practices are exemplary.

## **SIGNIFICANCE**

The property is nationally significant. The mansion is a national historic landmark designated as the George Perkins Marsh Boyhood Home. Later it was owned by a railroad magnate (president of the Union Pacific), philanthropist, scientific farm owner, and conservationist Frederick Billings. The farm is listed on the Woodstock Village National Register of Historic Places designation as nationally significant. The farm and mansion complex reflects the contributions of Marsh to the intellectual underpinnings of the modern ecology movement, the practical application of late 19th century farm and forest management by Billings, and the efforts made by Laurance Rockefeller in the 20th century to perpetuate these earlier trends by helping preserve a significant cultural landscape. The farm complex clearly demonstrates the impact of the gentleman farmer and the application of scientific methods to late 19th century agriculture and reforestation.

The George Perkins Marsh Boyhood Home represents Theme XXXII Conservation of Natural resources--Subtheme A. Origin and Development of the Conservation Idea to 1870 illustrated in History and Prehistory in the National Park System and the National Historic Landmarks Program. The property also reflects Theme XI Agriculture--Subtheme F. Farming on the East Coast for local Markets (Dairying, Fruits, and Vegetables). Based on the recent study by Robin Winks, it is apparent that the Billings occupancy is co-equal in significance to the Marsh occupancy.

## **INTEGRITY**

The site possesses substantial integrity. The George Perkins Marsh Boyhood Home has been physically incorporated in the Victorian-era brick Rockefeller Mansion. The layout and appearance of the farm reflects the Billings stewardship, and the 1890 farm manager's residence has been professionally restored. The Billings Farm and Museum facility skillfully melds historic and contemporary development onsite. The surrounding landscape has been protected through various mechanisms including fee ownership, easements, private recreational development, public open space, and strong local development restrictions.

## **ISSUES**

According to the most recent (7-24-90) mission statement:

The Billings Farm & Museum preserves significant portions of the Billings mansion, farm, and forests--and interprets these to the public as an educational museum of Vermont's heritage and values. These preserved properties reflect the significant roles of George Perkins Marsh, Julia and Frederick Billings, and Mary and Laurance Rockefeller, in the development of an

American conservation ethic. Of special interest to the museum are the related cultural traditions and values of farm families in east central Vermont. Preservation of these properties also furthers the historical and environmental integrity of Woodstock.

Through the preservation and interpretation of this important heritage, the museum seeks to stimulate reflection and insight into the relevance of Vermont's rural values to the present and the future to Americans generally.

In March, 1987 the Billings Farm & Museum prepared a "Long-Range Plan" which contains the following goal:

Our long range goal is to eventually include the mansion, the farm and related facilities, and the forest as an integrated unit substantially as they were at the time of Frederick Billings.... We have. . . moved forward in the preservation of the Billings Farm heritage which was representative of farming in the 1890's and earlier in Vermont by establishing the Billings Farm & Museum. We hope to create a cultural and educational resource for the community and that this will help enhance the historic and contemporary values of Woodstock.

According to the local sources contacted during the fieldtrip, the principal issue at the Billings Farm and Museum is one of providing institutional continuity. Mr. Rockefeller is anxious to insure a professional level of management, operation, and interpretation be maintained at the various sites in the future. Presently the Woodstock Foundation, an entity managed and funded by Mr. Rockefeller, guides and subsidizes the Billings Farm and Museum. A 12 member professional staff organized into six divisions assumes day-to-day operations responsibilities. Over the past several years, the museum complex has operated at approximately a \$600,000 (and larger) annual deficit. There is no assurance that an effective level of funding and professional management can be maintained in the future. Thus Mr. Rockefeller is searching for an effective mechanism to perpetuate the professional management, protection, and operation of the properties. Apparently Mr. Rockefeller may be prepared to establish a sizeable endowment (approximately 10 million dollars according to the president of the Woodstock Foundation). But there is concern that this possible endowment be managed effectively in the future and that a qualified entity operate the property according to the high standards established by Mr. Rockefeller and his professional staff.

The active dairy farm also operates with a significant annual deficit (and apparently has for years). During the past several years the shortfall has run about \$300,000 annually. Apparently farm income is derived from the sale of milk, breeding stock, stock breeding services, and show prizes.

Also there is no guarantee that sympathetic local land protection controls will continue in place in the future to insure the preservation and enhancement of visual resources in the vicinity of the farm and mansion. The pressure of future development in Woodstock could negatively impact the museum and farm's visual qualities.

## THREATS

Currently there are no direct threats to the farm and mansion complex. The physical plant is in good repair. Of course this could change once the direct influence of Mr. Rockefeller diminishes or ceases.



## **MANAGEMENT/LEGISLATIVE ALTERNATIVES**

These possible management alternatives are suggestions made on the basis of a brief fieldtrip to Woodstock. The Denver Service Center professionals only met with the director of the Billings Farm and Museum, key staff, and the president of the Woodstock Foundation, and not with Mr. Rockefeller who was in New York. No public contacts were made.

If this project were to proceed, a viable public involvement program would have to be instituted to ensure buy-in by the Woodstock community in a state well known for its long tradition of local initiative and non-federal involvement. The following alternative futures and other possibilities would have to be tested rigorously through the planning as well as public involvement process.

### **SHARED ELEMENTS OF EACH ALTERNATIVE**

The first three of the following elements have been considered in this "Special Report", while the remaining three items and other special study prerequisites must be addressed in a more in-depth evaluation and analysis of the Woodstock based cultural, natural, scenic, and recreational resources.

- Continuation of the outstanding stewardship of cultural and landscape resources established and nurtured by George Perkins Marsh, Frederick Billings and Mr. and Mrs. Laurance S. Rockefeller.
- Continue to identify and manage historically significant elements of conservation and agricultural themes of the United States.
- Outline responsibilities for each institution(s) for management, development, preservation and interpretation.
- Identify costs to implement each alternative.
- Project capital and operating costs.
- Identify sources of revenue.

### **ALTERNATIVE 1 - CONTINUATION OF EXISTING INSTITUTIONS**

Continue present management and funding by the Woodstock Foundation. There is no assurance that adequate funding and empathetic management will continue in the future. As foundation board members change, so might interests that would place management of the farm and mansion in lower priority over time.

### **ALTERNATIVE 2 - EXPAND ROLE OF LOCAL/STATE INSTITUTIONS**

Under this arrangement two potential scenarios exist. The first being the conversion of the Woodstock foundation from a local endowment to land and facilities manager of the Billings Farm museum and

eventually the Mansion. The objective would be to continue present management and funding by the Woodstock Foundation. There is no assurance that adequate funding and empathetic management will continue in the future. As foundation board members change, so might interests that would place management of the farm and mansion in lower priority over time.

The second prospect is for the foundation to work with the state of Vermont to share management and funding responsibilities to operate some portion of the total complex. The interest of Vermont state parks, University of Vermont, and the Vermont Folklife Center would be pursued under Alternative 2.

The state could be invited to participate in the management and funding of the property in conjunction with the Woodstock Foundation. The state currently manages the Calvin Coolidge birthplace and home at nearby Plymouth Notch in a very effective manner. This site attracts 45,000 visitors annually. Also the state is beginning to develop the 18th century farm with great integrity known as the Theron Boyd property at Quechee, Vermont about six miles from Woodstock. At this point, the state may not have the financial and personnel resources to develop and manage another major property in the Woodstock area.

A major variation of Alternative 2 could address a state only operated complex. If the Woodstock Foundation chooses, it could endow the state with monies to continue operating the farm and museum. Many combinations of utilizing resources could be applied. State or local institutions will pay salaries for staff. The Woodstock Foundation could underwrite construction, maintenance, and rehabilitation.

### **ALTERNATIVE 3 - FEDERAL TURNKEY APPROACH**

Congress could establish a financial/technical NPS role for a specific duration. For instance for a limited interval, the NPS would provide technical assistance, provide staff, and money to the mansion for visitor use. Use of Woodstock Foundation, museum, farm, and curatorial personnel would be part of the extended team to coordinate a development/visitor use plan. After a four to six year period, the NPS role would be transferred to the Woodstock Foundation, state or other designated entity. The legislative approach would identify monies to prepare the mansion for visitor use. The mansion, carriage house, offsite parking facilities, and shuttle services would be developed. Positions for operations, protection, maintenance, and interpretation would be provided under this arrangement. This approach could also be tailored legislatively to have NPS operate the mansion and/or museum for four to six years with an option for a permanent role, based on future evaluation. Such an approach may be palatable to the Vermont political delegation.

This alternative might also work by having the area designated by Congress as an NPS affiliated area. Current ownership and management would remain in present form. Funding, technical assistance, and the application of appropriate standards would then be provided by the NPS.



#### **ALTERNATIVE 4 - NPS MANAGEMENT OF MANSION, FARM AND MUSEUM**

The NPS would be a logical entity to become involved with this site in some capacity due to the feasibility and suitability of these resources. This of course is heavily dependent on bi-partisan political support and an adequate level of funding for management, operations, and maintenance for this to occur.

Perhaps the most effective arrangement would be an overall NHS designation of the entire complex. The NPS would work in concert with the Woodstock Foundation to operate the site with the NPS primarily concerned with the development and management of the mansion at the appropriate time with funding provided by the federal sector. The Woodstock Foundation would continue to operate the Billings Farm and Museum in technical concert with the NPS. This portion of the property would be funded by visitor admissions, sales, membership fees, donations, and an endowment established by the Woodstock Foundation.

As for the modern dairy operation, the Woodstock Foundation could either operate the farm directly or lease it to a willing party. In any case, the operation of the farm should be continued for an effective and interesting visitor experience. Currently there are a number of privately or publicly active agricultural-based museums around the nation including Old Bethpage on Long Island, Sturbridge Village and Plymouth Plantation in Massachusetts, a farmer's museum at Cooperstown, New York, Old World Wisconsin, the Iowa Farm Museum, and agricultural operations at Greenfield Village in Michigan among others.

It does not make sense for the NPS to own and manage the dairy farm. According to informed sources at the Billings Farm and Museum, the dairy operation has to be subsidized heavily by Mr. Rockefeller--there is no assurance that the NPS could support the facility without special appropriations. Currently the NPS operates several farms among them the Oxenhill Farm in Maryland, the goat herd at Carl Sandberg in North Carolina, the Booker T. Washington facility in Virginia, and the LBJ ranch in Texas as well as numerous historic farm sites part of Civil War battlefields. This farm complex is more complicated to operate than farm fields leased for crop or hay production or any living history programs now operating in the system.

Also there is no good reason for the NPS to assume management of the museum portion of the complex. This facility has been professionally managed and operated by the existing staff under direction of the Woodstock Foundation. In addition the exhibits deal with local, state, and regionally significant resources rather than the national story. The current operators are effectively managing the museum.

#### **ALTERNATIVE 5 - NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATION HERITAGE PROJECT**

Due to its cooperative implications beyond Woodstock (as well as the limited focus of this special report), alternative 5 is presented in embryonic format only. New England can proudly boast of many writers, artists, and philosophers that helped shape the American conservation ethic. New Englanders such as Emerson, Thoreau, Olmstead, and Marsh had lasting influence in the development of the conservation movement in the nineteenth century. The impact of Billings and Rockefeller is well known. Consequently the conservation tradition lives today in the form of parks, historic sites, national forests, and greenline areas such as the Adirondak Forest Preserve in New York. Seemingly this

significant national theme could be treated effectively with an intra-regional programmatic approach based on interpretive methodologies rather than traditional site management.

The Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller Mansion fulfills at least one theme conservation of natural resources reflecting the 1870s. Marsh is a pivotal figure in the wellspring of the conservation movement. Frederick Billings advances the story. Laurance Rockefeller is a key figure and renowned conservationist in more recent times. An exciting opportunity exists to tie together numerous facets of America's unique conservation heritage. This site can add a significant role due to the influence of its occupants over two centuries and their exemplary stewardship over the land. At this point George Perkins Marsh is practically invisible at the Billings Farm and Museum as well as at the mansion. This option would strive to highlight and interpret Marsh's contributions as well as other seminal figures in the conservation movement.

Alternative 5 calls for an expanded interpretive focus by the site's manager. A considerable collection of landscape paintings by artists is displayed at the mansion that challenges interpreters to enhance the influences that artists had in distinguishing culture with the natural beauty of the United States.

#### **SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE NPS ACTIVITY**

Given the significance of this site in United States history, the interests of the NPS and the politics at work in New England, it is important to think about our next steps. If the NPS is funded to conduct a study of alternatives, the Washington office should call a strategy session to flush out issues, subjects of concern, and identify a methodology to conduct this study. The meeting would include Director James Ridenour, Associate Director Denis Galvin, Associate Director Jerry Rogers, Regional Director Gerry Patten, and Chief Historian Ed Bearss, Historian Ben Levy, Senior Landscape Architect Rich Giamberdine, and Supervisory Planner Ron Johnson, due to their knowledge of the project. Representatives from the Vermont delegation with specific knowledge about Woodstock should also attend and the agenda should address what, when, who, and how. The delegation would help NPS scope the issues of local politics of Woodstock.

Team composition is very important, as is experience, and background with partnership projects involving an array of institutions and alternative methods of management and protection. In situations like Woodstock, knowledge of the political environment should precede performing actual field work. One or two weeks of making informal contacts with the congressional delegation, state and local officials, local citizens, and Woodstock Foundation would be valuable to understand people, issues, institutions, and local subtleties. It might also be prudent to use the state of Vermont, Woodstock Foundation, or their consultants as the lead on this study with several NPS personnel serving on the team. Without question, NPS has the best credentials and skills to develop a study of alternatives, but there are situations where a study should be managed by those with roots in the area. Consultants are routinely employed by the foundation for planning, design and construction projects. In this instance, we are dealing with people that are familiar and work with processes similar to the NPS approach.



## CONCLUSION

There are few instances to report regarding candidate areas for possible NPS management or involvement wherein visitor use, land protection, historic preservation, maintenance, and interpretation are so well established and professionally managed. Facilities layout and design elements are of high quality with attention given to use of native materials, historic fabric, and ability to blend skillfully with the historic scene.

The NPS has an exciting and timely opportunity to become involved in some capacity with this nationally significant resource. Future project work depends on the quality and experience of planners and technicians assigned to the job to provide a well documented foundation for possible subsequent design and construction activity as well as park operations if so directed. The project must be coordinated effectively with Mr. and Mrs. Rockefeller as well as the Woodstock community to maximize opportunities as well as minimize pitfalls for the NPS.

ILLUSTRATIONS



MAPS

L58 (DSC-MPG)

Mr. and Mrs. Laurance S. Rockefeller  
54 Elm Street  
Woodstock, Vermont 05091

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Rockefeller:

At the request of National Park Service Director James M. Ridenour and Associate Director Denis P. Galvin, we visited your Woodstock properties to explore future possibilities. We were graciously hosted by your staff at the Billings Farm and Museum. A delightful luncheon tour of your home highlighted the week.

Our thanks to you and Mrs. Rockefeller for all courtesies extended during our stay. Thomas Debevoise, David Donath, Janet Houghton, as well as Douglas Horne generously shared their time and knowledge. Through their efforts we gained a thorough understanding and appreciation of these nationally significant cultural resources. As planners, we especially appreciated the harmony, integrity, and relationships that exist between the farm, mansion, town, and the surrounding landscape. We marvelled over the "Sense of Place" that exists at Woodstock. The trip to Woodstock allows us an opportunity to thank you and the Rockefeller family for much of the beauty present throughout the park system.

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Richard V. Giamberdine  
Senior Landscape Architect

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Ronald W. Johnson  
Supervisory Planner

cc:  
WASO-760-Galvin  
DSC-M-Reynolds

bcc:  
DSC-TCE-Ron Johnson  
DSC-MPG-Rich Giamberdine

MPG:RGiamberdine:at:8/23/90:2160



L58 (DSC-MPG)

Memorandum

To: Associate Director, Planning and Development, WASO  
From: Senior Landscape Architect, Supervisory Planner, Denver Service Center  
Reference: The Billings Farm and Museum/Rockefeller Mansion Woodstock, Vermont  
Subject: A Special Report

The attached special report contains our findings based on a quick trip to Woodstock, Vermont in late July. Suffice it to say that the property is nationally significant and displays integrity as well as being suitable and feasible for possible National Park Service activity.

If we can be of further service, please contact us.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Richard V. Giamberdine

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ronald W. Johnson

Attachment

cc:  
DSC-M-Reynolds

DSC-MPG-RGiamberdine:at:8/21/90:2160