

THE KIMBALL CASTLE STORY

The Evening Citizen

VOL. 58 NO. 116 (ESTABLISHED OCT. 12, 1925) LACONIA, N.H., SATURDAY, MAY 12, 1984

Gilford Landmark Crumbling Away

By JIM MOORE

GILFORD — Time and man's indifference, the obvious diseases of the regal structure, steadily push the antique building into anonymity as it reigns over an overgrown hillside perch above Route 11. Kimball's Castle, once a symbol of prosperity, now lies dormant and wasted, a gaping loss to the cultural heritage of the Lakes Region.

Since ownership passed from the founding family in 1960, the castle and its 280 acres underwent the rapid process of decay. The rooms, once filled with hand-crafted furniture, exquisite paintings and rare tapestries, have been stripped by vandals. The grassy slopes of Locke's Hill now bear a thick covering of wild brambles and willow trees that interrupt the majestic panorama of Lake Winnepesaukee and the White Mountains.

Most people have forgotten the castle even exists and even fewer people remember the colorful history surrounding the founder of the property or the battle fought by the town to keep it from falling into the hands of commercial developers.

In the beginning the idea for the castle was spawned in the imagination of Benjamin Kimball, a self-made railroad magnate, while on a tour of Europe. In the late 1890s he moved onto The Lady of The Lake, anchored at Glendale, while his new

home was under construction. Local stone masons were contracted to quarry and shape the large stone blocks used to erect the walls and parapets. The interior was finished in a heavy oak casing complete with hand-turned rails lining the stairway and center balcony.

When the building was completed and ready for

occupancy, Kimball scuttled his floating home in the middle of Glendale Bay and took up residence in the castle.

Kimball used the castle as his home until he died in July, 1920. His wife and daughter-in-law continued residing at the castle until their deaths.

In the late 1950s the property, along with a \$400,000

endowment, passed into the hands of the Mary Mitchell Wildlife Foundation with the stipulation that the bulk of the estate be used as a wildlife refuge.

Mismanagement of the funds and a disinterested caretaker quickly led to the demise of the property. Vandals began looting the

CASTLE, Page Three UNDER



Stone Monument

Kimball's Castle on Locke's Hill in Gilford stands as a stone monument to an earlier era of affluence.

contents and carrying off pieces of the finely crafted woodwork as souvenirs. By the 1970s, the castle and property was in a poor state of repair, stripped of its wealth and facing the threat of being subdivided for sale to land developers. A court order solicited by the Attorney General's office was needed to stop the trustees from selling the property against the expressed wishes of the deceased owners.

A group of concerned residents, alarmed over the rapid decay of the property, formed an organization to investigate the mishandling of the estate. Pressure was brought to bear against the trustees, and the property, complete with castle, out-

buildings and 280 acres was deeded to the town. Although the move guaranteed the property would be kept intact, it came too late to keep the building and its contents from being plundered. Now disinterest and indecision continue to wear on the dilapidated mansion. Taxpayers do not want to accept the costly burden of restoring the building and are uncertain what to do with the property that has become a millstone around their necks.

One organization, the Natural Science Youth Foundation, has offered to unburden the town by assuming ownership of the Kimball Castle estate. The foundation proposed to convert the property into a museum for lake memorabilia and a nature learning center for young people.

But concern over details of the proposal stalled negotiations between the town and the science foundation. Voters turned down the institution's offer at this year's town meeting and continue to hold the property in a state of limbo. Limbo, described in the "New Webster's Dictionary" as "a place, state or condition of people and things forgotten or no longer wanted," is a term well suited to Kimball's Castle. In limbo, things do not happen, time passes by and the value of what exists is lost to those who fail to notice.

Kimball's Castle is a landmark with a great deal of value that continues to be overlooked daily by a busy society which whizzes past, the property on Route 11, never realizing that only a short distance away sits a crumbling monument to their own heritage.

KIMBALL FAMILY ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

1980



Kimball's Castle, Gilford, New Hampshire. (Photo courtesy of the Laconia (NH) Evening Citizen.)

Kimball Castle Update

Many of you who attended the Reunion at Gunstock in Gilford, N.H. visited Kimball Castle, and probably remember the state of disrepair and the vandalism that marred it. The castle was built at the turn of the century by Benjamin Ames Kimball (see April, 1980 Newsletter) and was meant to resemble a castle on the Rhine. After Benjamin's daughter Charlotte died in 1960 the estate was left to the Alford Wild Life Sanctuary. From this organization to the Mary Mitchell Humane Fund didn't help with its preservation. In April of this year the fortunes of the castle finally took a turn for the better. The property is being transferred to the National Science for Youth Foundation, an organization involved with preserving land in its natural state. The property has also been placed on the National Register for Historic

Buildings. John Ripley Forbes of the National Science for Youth Foundation will supervise the restoration project; eventually a portion of the castle will house a museum featuring displays of animals and birds indigenous to the area. Outside there will be nature trails, and the emphasis of the entire project will be the education of children.

The entire rehabilitation and restoration will take several years, and cost in the neighborhood of \$1 million. Many people are involved in the project; Kimballs everywhere owe them a grateful vote of thanks. In Gilford, special mention goes to Margie Cailler, federal funds coordinator for establishing the property on the National Register; to Steve McCabe, Gilford's town administrator and to Sandra McGonagle, Chairman of the Board of Selectmen. The architectural plans were developed by Paul Mirski, who contributed his time. Serving on the steering committee is Benjamin Kimball Ayer of

Moultonboro, N.H., a descendant of Benjamin Ames Kimball's brother, John. When the project is completed it will be turned over to the town of Gilford. Mr. Ayer adds that hopefully by that time a fund will be established for its upkeep.



Kimball Castle 1973

Page 6

The LAKER

Wednesday July 4, 1984

Town owns a castle without a home

by Kathy O'Meara

The Town of Gilford has a problem. It has acquired a castle and it doesn't know quite what to do with it.

The story began with a man named Benjamin Ames Kimball. Kimball was a self-made man. He was born in 1833 and went to work in a machine shop when he was fifteen years old. He joined the first class of the Chandler Scientific Department at Dartmouth College in 1851, and went to work for the Concord Railroad after graduation from Dartmouth in 1854.

Kimball worked his way to the top of his business between that time and 1895 when he became president of the Boston and Montreal Railroad. In the later decades of the last century, the Boston and Montreal ran a passenger ship service on Lake Winnepesaukee, competing its arch competitor, the Boston and Maine.

The current MS Mount Washington's predecessor, the sidewheeler, SS Mt. Washington, was run at one time by the Boston and Maine Railroad as a connector of rail service from one side of the Big Lake to the other.

For years a competition, including a fabled race thrived between the SS Mt. Washington and the Lady of the Lake. The Lady of the Lake was owned by the Boston and Montreal, not to be outdone by the Boston and Maine. Kimball retired the Lady of the Lake in 1893 and moved it to the present location of the Gilford town docks to serve as living quarters for a crew which built Kimball a castle.

Kimball Castle may be seen from the lake today, high on Locke's Hill in Gilford majestically overlooking Winnepesaukee. Kimball made his summer home at the Castle, commuting from Lakeport

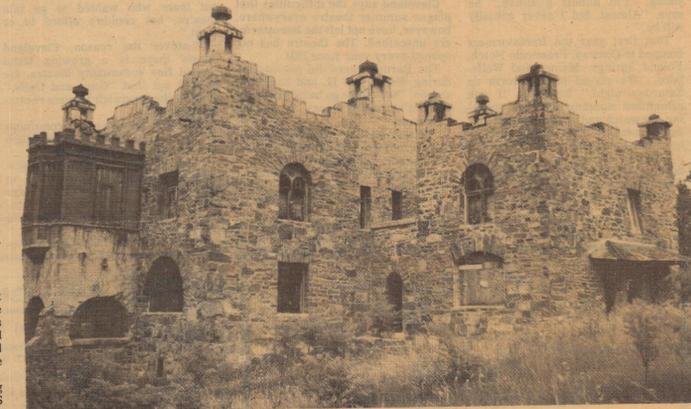


PHOTO BY SCOTT O'MEARA

Kimball Castle

to Concord in a private rail car. He even changed the name of the Concord and Montreal, to the Concord, Montreal and Lakeshore.

Kimball was inspired to build a castle having seen them in Europe. It was constructed between 1897 and 1899. Most of the stone in the castle came from the site on Locke's hill. The cut parapet granite was hauled by rail from Concord. The Castle is located on about 280

acres, about a third of which was landscaped. There were steps descending to Lake Winnepesaukee, 800 feet below, many of the steps remain today.

The Kimball Castle property includes, in addition to the Castle, a gazebo and six service buildings, a cottage, a stable, the driver's house, an ice house, a carriage house and a pump house. The two-and-a-half story Castle is

made of stone and constructed in a Medieval castle style complete with parapets, arches, and winding stone staircases. One of its most unique characteristics is a large two story octagonal balcony, supported in part by

(Continued on Page 7)

● Kimball Castle

Continued from Page 6)

octagonal columns, and lit by an octagonal skylight.

Among the Castle's most outstanding features, however is the view it commands. Before the landscaped area grew into brush and forest the view from the castle included all of Lake Winnepesaukee, the Ossipee Mountains and clearly beyond, the White Mountains.

Benjamin Kimball lived in his castle until he died in July 1920. His son Henry had died the year before, so the Castle was used only by Benjamin Kimball's wife and daughter-in-law, Charlotte Atkinson Kimball. Charlotte Kimball lived in the Castle until her death in 1960. Upon her death, there were no Kimball heirs, and the Castle has had neither master

nor mistress in nearly twenty-five years. Charlotte Kimball left the Castle, along with four hundred thousand dollars to the Mary Mitchell Wildlife Foundation. The Castle and property was put up for sale in 1960 for \$100,000, but was not sold. None of the four hundred thousand dollars was set aside and used to maintain the castle.

The property and Castle remained in the hands of the Mary Mitchell Foundation until 1977 when the Foundation expressed a desire to give it to the Town of Gilford. In that time, little or no maintenance was done to the property. Vandalism has taken a serious toll. Broken windows have exposed interior sections to the weather and inevitable damage has occurred. The Attorney General's office ruled that the property could be taken from

and given to some appropriate entity that would respect Charlotte Kimball's wishes. It may never be used for residential, commercial, or industrial use, however. The town assumed ownership of the Castle and land in 1981. The Natural Science of Youth Foundation has expressed an interest in acquiring or using the property for some of its programs, but as yet no agreement has been reached with the town.

While it has not found a solution, the town has not been idle in working on the problems what to do with a lonely castle.

A Master Plan for Kimball Castle was published in 1982, a cooperative project of the town, the State Cooperative Extension Service, and the U.S. Forest Service.

Gilford townspeople made it clear at their 1984 town meeting that they don't want to spend taxpayers money repairing or renovating the castle. A new Kimball Castle Committee is being established to take another look at the possible solutions.

Charged by the selectmen with organizing that committee, John McGonagle says the Castle is now in such serious disrepair that something must be done, or it must be torn down. "It's dangerous," he said. "And vandalism continues to be a problem." McGonagle is hopeful that some sort of agreement can be reached with the Natural Science for Youth Foundation.

In the meantime, the Town of Gilford continues to own a Castle, and try to find a home for it.

Gilford Mulls Selling Castle To Save Area

By JOHN COZENS
Staff Writer

GILFORD — What to do with Kimball Castle?

The town, which is trustee for the 90-year-old stone structure and its 125 acres, has grappled with that question for the last eight years. Now, officials are proposing to subdivide the property and sell off a 10 to 15 acre parcel, with the castle and several outbuildings, and use the revenues from the sale to implement the Trust provisions for the remaining 100-plus acres.

Residents will have an opportunity to mull the situation again on Wednesday, June 14, the date of an informational hearing with the Board of Selectmen.

"We have to make sure our current thought process is in concurrence with what people want to see," said Town Administrator Dave Caron.

The meeting takes place at 7:30 p.m. in the town hall's Conference Room A.

The selectmen will update residents on the current status of the castle, reveal their latest plan, and accept suggestions as to what the town should do.

Back in June, 1981, the property off Lazy Brook Lane was deeded to Gilford by the Natural Science for Youth Foundation, which had inherited it from the Mary Mitchell Humane Foundation.

Despite an ambitious master plan completed in 1982 by the

Kimball Castle Association, on behalf of the Board of Selectmen and townspeople, and recent attempts to lease the property to the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, little has happened since 1981.

At a public meeting last year, residents had voted to lease the land to the Fish and Game Department, but the deal fell apart.

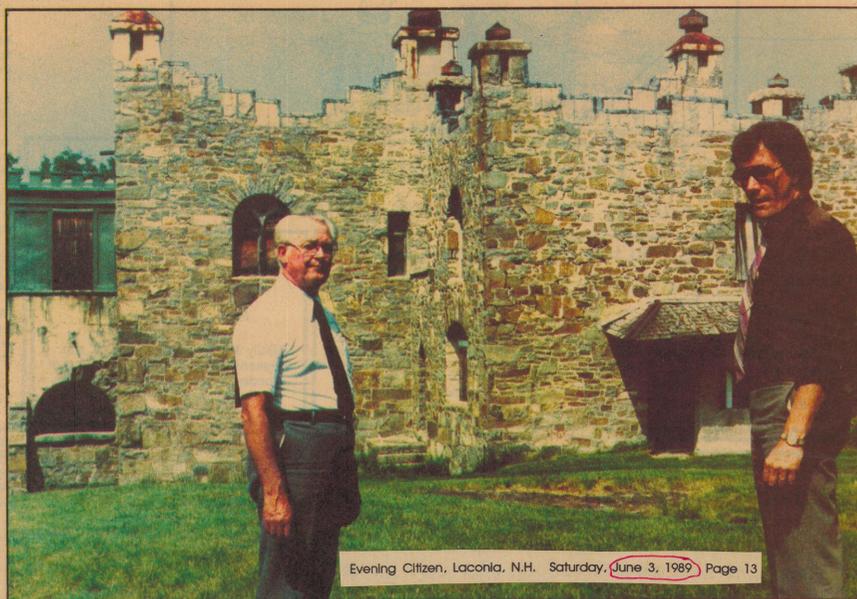
Under the proposed lease, the department would have been responsible for implementing the provisions of trust, which require that the land be used for some sort of wildlife educational program and the several outbuildings on the site be improved. The trust says nothing about maintaining the castle, said Town Administrator Caron.

The roughly 90-page 1982 master plan contained a list of "identifiable physical projects" to improve the appearance of the castle and land and make it more attractive.

"Although the town is under no obligation by the trust to upkeep the castle, it has been the impression of the selectmen that that's been the goal of the people," Caron said.

"Unfortunately, there's a significant price tag on a lot of these goals and objectives."

The town has for years tried to find a person to carry out the provision in the trust — run the educational programs and maintain the outbuildings — without any success.



Evening Citizen, Laconia, N.H. Saturday, June 3, 1989 Page 13

Castle Inspection

Gordon Weymouth, chairman of Gilford's Board of Selectmen, and Public Works Director Sheldon Morgan inspect Kimball Castle. The 90-year old landmark will be discussed at a hearing on June 14 when

The leasing agreement with the Fish and Game Department fell apart when the department informed the town it had no further intention to maintain or use the outbuildings, which include two large barns, a house, and a chicken coop.

The state also said that it intended to succeed the town as Trustee.

"It was sort of a step back for

us," Caron said.

Town counsel and the selectmen later met with the state Attorney General, who is responsible for overseeing charitable trusts, to discuss the possibility of subdividing the castle and outbuildings onto a separate parcel and selling it off to "a person or persons interested in renovating the castle and providing some sort of public

access," Caron said.

town officials plan to reveal their latest plan on what to do with the crumbling structure.

Caron admitted that the cost of renovating the crumbling castle, "may not be economically feasible," which could undermine the selectmen's current plan.

"If that's the case, then it's back to the drawing board," he said.

The castle was built in 1897-99 by Benjamin Kimball, who was president of the Boston and Montreal Railroad.



1978

Town Seeks Ways To Preserve Castle

GILFORD — The town will take a two-track approach in seeking a solution on what to do with Kimball Castle, Town Administrator Dave Caron said yesterday.

While the selectmen will continue with plans to subdivide the castle, along with 13 acres of land, from the 125 acre tract, they will also explore the possibility of finding someone to lease the entire property, Caron said.

The state Attorney General's office is currently petitioning to allow the town to subdivide the property and sell the castle.

The money from the sale would be used by the town to administer the provisions of the trust for the remaining 112 acres.

The property, along with the provisions of the trust, were deeded to the town in 1981.

The provisions of the trust call for the upkeep of several outbuildings (but not the castle) and the use of the property for wildlife education programs.

However, since townspeople at a 1979 town meeting voted not to expend any town funds on the property, the town has not been able to carry out the provisions or restore the castle.

The town has sought to find a

lesor, willing to repair the castle and also administer the trust provisions, without success.

Caron said the town would continue to explore bids for survey and legal and appraisal services to identify the land to be subdivided, establish a market price, and formulate a legal document to protect the town's interests.

Caron said the town is still working on several leads on people who are interested in leasing the property, restoring the castle, and carrying out the provisions of the trust.

"It's the best solution to the problem, but hasn't been the most viable," Caron said.

One of those interested in leasing the property attended Wednesday's selectmen's meeting, and urged the town not to subdivide the land.

"You can keep control," said Marjorie Prolman of Laconia. "I would hate to see it coming this close to having it in your hands and giving it up."

She said keeping the property in the town's possession was the best way of protecting it.

"The question is, how much do people want to save it," she said.

Evening Citizen, Laconia, N.H. Saturday, August 26, 1989 Page 5

A Tale of Two Millionaires

By DEL BRANDT
Citizen Columnist

This is a tale of two millionaires, each living in a castle on high ground overlooking Lake Winnepesaukee in New Hampshire.

One of the millionaires was named Thomas Plant, who made a fortune as an investor. The other was Benjamin A. Kimball, president of the Boston, Concord and Montreal Railroad.

Kimball was the first to build his castle atop Locke's Hill on the Gilford side of the lake, beginning construction of the large stone building in 1897 and finishing it two years later. In 1914, 15 years after the Kimball Castle was erected, Plant built his castle on the Moultonboro side, thereby fulfilling a long-cherished dream. It was difficult to say which of the two castles was the most elaborate. It was just as difficult to judge which one had the best view of the Lakes Region's many beauties as each commanded a sweeping view of the Big Lake and its surrounding mountain ranges.

When Tom Plant walked out on the veranda of his castle, he looked across the wide expanse of water to the Belknap while Kimball was viewing the Ossipees. Which man was the most blessed? They both had a piece of heaven in their respective pockets. Could anything possibly go wrong? Fate has a way of dealing blank cards and time has treated one castle more kindly than the other.

When financial misfortune and domestic problems overtook Plant and his health failed, his holdings were sold outright, clearing the way for others to take over his castle and to eventually turn it into a tourist attraction we now know as "Castle in the Clouds."

Ironically, Plant called his castle "Lucknow," but his luck ran out as others stepped into the picture. After years of private ownership, the castle is now open to the public and is rated as a foremost tourist stop in the area. Its original elegance has been retained — even enhanced.

Over on the other side of the water it has been a different story. Kimball had heirs and undertook the right thing for them by establishing a trust for his property in the sky. Death, however, was another matter and even railroad magnates and their kin die.

Since 1960, the last time a member of the Kimball family occupied it, the castle has been dying a slow, agonizing death while the town of Gilford, which finds itself holding title to the remains of a deteriorated castle and surrounding acreage, ponders what to do.

The question arises: "How come the folks in Moultonboro were able to turn the castle of Tom Plant to a constructive use while Gilford remains unable to act?" Probably the biggest reason is that the Kimball estate became a legal mess for the town to deal with and it has been dealing with it as best it can, considering the restrictions of its use.

Some townspeople have expressed a willingness to see the castle restored, not necessarily Castle in the Clouds II, but as part of a private estate it once was. The possibilities of the wherewithal, willing to give the castle the proverbial "tender loving care" can be found. Others say the crumbling old castle should be demolished and that Gilford should move into the 21st century with this white elephant off its back.

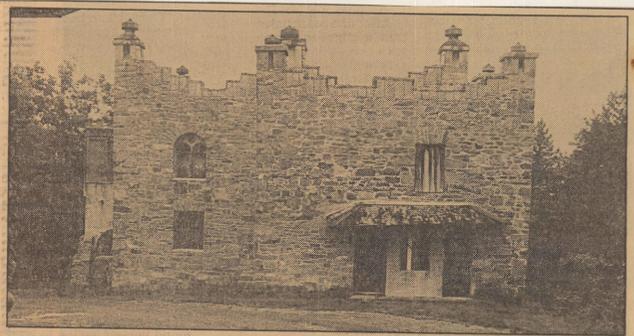
That would be a sad ending to one of the Lakes Region's finest treasures, an ending we are sure would have made Benjamin A. Kimball quite unhappy.

No, Kimball did not build the castle with his own two hands but he personally supervised its construction. He wanted it to look exactly like the castle he had seen along the Rhine River during his travels in Europe. Most of the rock used to build Kimball's castle was dug out of the side of Locke's Hill just as the rocks used to build Plant's castle were cut from local granite found on the mountainside.

Rocks for Kimball's castle were carted to the building site by mule teams. The larger pieces of granite which topped the structure were shipped from Concord. The interior woodwork, much of it still restorable, was built to specifications in England at Kimball's request and shipped to America where it was carried by train to Glendale, and from there, by oxen to the castle for assembling. It would seem that something built with such care should be worthy of preserving even at this late date.

No less an authority than historian Arthur Tilton recently stated that the castle as it stands today, ravaged by time and vandalism, is not beyond repair. Even Amy Justin Matlage, a first grader at Pleasant Street School in Laconia, believes her great-great-great uncle's castle should be saved. "If Kimball Castle is wrecked I will be real sad," she wrote in a letter to Readers' Forum in the Citizen.

Meanwhile, everybody is waiting to see what eventually happens up there on Locke's Hill and if the tale of the second of the two millionaires' castles can have a happy ending.



Kimball Castle, a 90-year-old Gilford landmark at the summit of Locke's Hill, may be subdivided and sold to provide funds for wildlife educational programs on the rest of the 125-acre site. An informational hearing will be held at the municipal building Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. (Staff Photo by Carol Carter)

Hearing Scheduled Next Week on Fate Of Gilford's Crumbling Kimball Castle

GILFORD — The future of a fascinating Lakes Region landmark will be discussed at a public hearing next Wednesday night when town officials present options for the historic Kimball Castle.

Residents have been invited to attend the session with selectmen at 7:30 p.m. at the municipal building.

Kimball Castle, an impressive stone structure at the summit of Locke's Hill, was built in the late 1800s by Benjamin Kimball, president of the Boston and Montreal Railroad.

The Science for Youth Foundation, which had inherited the property, deeded the 125-acre estate to Gilford in 1981.

During the past eight years, town officials have wrestled with possible uses for the property.

An 80-page master plan was compiled by the Kimball Castle Association and efforts were made to lease the property to the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department.

But efforts to generate interest in the project failed, according to Town Administrator David Caron.

Nobody was interested in running education-

al programs and maintaining the buildings under terms of the Trust, he said.

The proposed lease to turn over responsibility for implementing provisions of the trust to the Fish and Game Department also failed.

Provisions of the Trust require that other buildings on the property be improved and the land used for a wildlife educational program.

But those provisions would burden taxpayers with a large expense, Caron said.

Town counsel and selectmen have met with representatives from the state Attorney General's Office to discuss responsibility for charitable trusts and the options of subdividing the castle onto a separate parcel.

Selectmen have suggested selling the castle to someone interested in renovating the structure and providing some type of public access.

Some money could then be earmarked for administering the trust requirements for the remaining land.

Some interest has been expressed by individuals in buying the castle, but the cost of renovating the crumbling structure could be prohibitive, Caron said.

Meeting at Gilford 6/12/89
30 people at hearing

KIMBALL CASTLE

SUMMARY OF KIMBALL HISTORY

Benjamin Ames Kimball was born in 1833. His father died a year later. When he was 15 years old, Benjamin joined his older brother, John, in the Concord Machine Shop.

In 1851, Benjamin joined the first class of the Chandler Scientific Department at Dartmouth College. Graduating in 1854, he went to work for the Concord Railroad. He became foreman and master mechanic when he was 26 years old. Benjamin and Myra Tilton Elliott of Canterbury were married in 1861.

Kimball became a partner in a railroad parts manufacturing company in 1865. He was elected to the New Hampshire House from Concord's 6th Ward in 1870. During the 1870's he was elected President of Concord Savings Bank, helped organize the Mechanic National Bank, became Director of the Manchester and North Weare Railroad and became a Director of the Concord and Montreal Railroad.

In 1895 Kimball became President of the Boston and Montreal Railroad. Throughout his affiliation with railroads, he worked for more administrative and engineering efficiency. He consolidated small connecting systems and successfully fought off attempts by the Grand Trunk Line to install a competing north-south route between Vermont and Boston.

Benjamin Kimball typified many successful businessmen of the time by having impressive civic accomplishments. In 1873, he helped Concord develop a public water system. In 1876 he was a member of the State Constitutional Convention. He also gave the Congregational Church of Penacook a new bell in 1876. In the 1880's Kimball represented New Hampshire in a Centennial Celebration in Philadelphia. He was an advisor in the construction of the Concord Library and the New Hampshire Historical Society Building. He continually gave to Dartmouth College.

The Concord and Montreal Railroad took over ownership of the Lakes Region. In 1893, the Lakes Region was retired and towed to Glendale to provide living quarters for Mr. Kimball's latest project—construction of a castle, inspired by ones he had seen in Europe. The castle was constructed between 1897-1899.

Kimball built a railroad spur from Lakeport to Dover and changed the name of the Concord and Montreal to the Concord, Montreal and Lakeshore. During the summer months, he commuted between Concord and Gilford in a private rail car.



A Man's Home Is His...

If you want to live like a king and have the money to do so, the town of Gilford is offering Kimball's Castle for sale. Built in 1897 by Ben Kimball, president of the Boston and Montreal Railroad, it is patterned on a German castle and offers expansive views of Lake Winnepesaukee and the mountains. Vacant for some 30 years, the

castle has fallen prey to vandals and, in the words of the town, "requires extensive renovations." Gilford is accepting proposals until Aug. 6. (Photo from the collection of Gale Memorial Library, Laconia.)



Castle Attracts Two Bids

By PHYLLIS MORRISSETTE
Staff Writer

GILFORD — One of two bidders for Kimball's Castle proposes a restoration of the structure into a museum and the grounds for public hiking trails, skiing and other activities, in a project to include Lakes Region residents in both restoring and use. The other proposes a bed and breakfast for the historic property.

Only two of seven prospective bidders had submitted bids for buying the castle, its outbuildings and a portion of its 125 acres on Locke's Hill by the time Town Administrator David Caron opened them late Monday.

Dollar amounts were \$41,000, from John A. Andrews Companies of Sterling, Va., for a bed and breakfast, and \$1,000 from Waterloom Studios and Wess Chauncey of Sanborn, for restoration and recreation. Selectmen are to decide at their 8:00 a.m. meeting Wednesday whether to accept one of the bids and start negotiations;

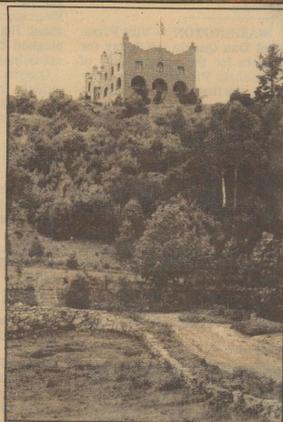
extend the deadline for bidding; reject the bids and readvertise; or reject the bids and review other alternatives for disposing of the town's ownership of the property.

Caron said the Andrews firm develops various types of properties. Waterloom Studios does furniture and house restoration, owner William "Bill" Tobin said today. Tobin is also Gilford building inspector. Faith Tobin, his wife, and Wess Chauncey operate Chauncey Arboriculture, a landscaping and arboriculture business.

The Waterloom-Chauncey bid is "an attempt to save the castle," Bill Tobin said. The three joint bidders hope to bring to life the town's expectations for the castle as written into its 1982 master plan.

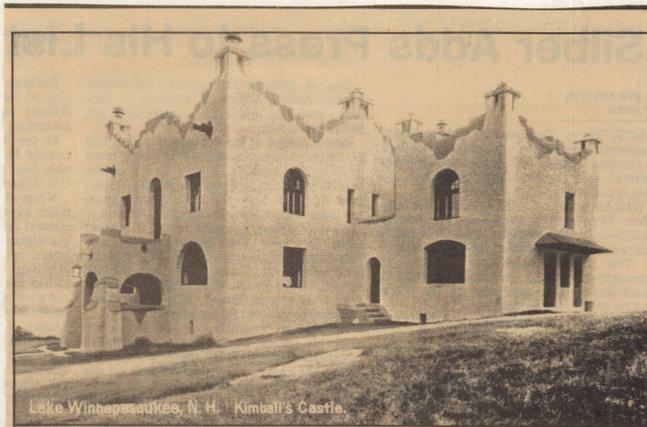
The town is trustee of the castle, built 1897-99 as a private home, and 125 acres, only a few acres of which are being offered for sale. Various attempts to find uses for the property have fallen through.

CASTLE, Page 12



Kimball's Castle

Kimball's Castle is shown above as it looked on a postcard printed many years ago and, at top, when Geoffrey Ruggles, Gilford town finance director, left, Selectman Gordon Weymouth and David Caron, town administrator, visited it Monday before opening bids from prospective buyers of the old landmark on Locke's Hill.



Lake Winnepesaukee, N.H. Kimball's Castle.

Up Close

Kimball's Castle in Gilford with its commanding views was a popular subject of postcard makers. This one chose to make a closeup view of the edifice.

CASTLE
FROM PAGE ONE

The Tobins and Chauncey propose to form an association of "local people," Bill Tobin said, drawing from the entire region any residents "who care to join us and make it a total restoration."

When they looked at the master plan, read the castle's history and saw the proposals in the plan for projects to improve the appearance of the property, they thought, "This is exactly what we'd like to do."

He added, "Our intentions are to give the town exactly what they wanted... what they laid out in the master plan."

Nature trails, cross-country ski trails and restoring the castle gardens are three projects he mentioned. "There are walkways that are absolutely magnificent down in the woods," he said.

"We want to get everyone involved and make it a Lakes Region project," he added.

If the Tobins and Chauncey

are the successful bidders, he said, they would open to the public as soon as they could, so area residents could see what the property is like now and watch the progress of restoration.

"I've examined the structure," Bill Tobin said. "The chance of the structure surviving this winter without some kind of protection," he commented, is small. Windows have been smashed. He said they would first seal the building and cover it for the winter.

The three bidders see the work as a 12-year project. "Perhaps it's a little insanity," Tobin acknowledged. "I guess you could say I'm a dreamer."

If they buy the castle and no community support develops for the project, they would restore it and move in, he said.

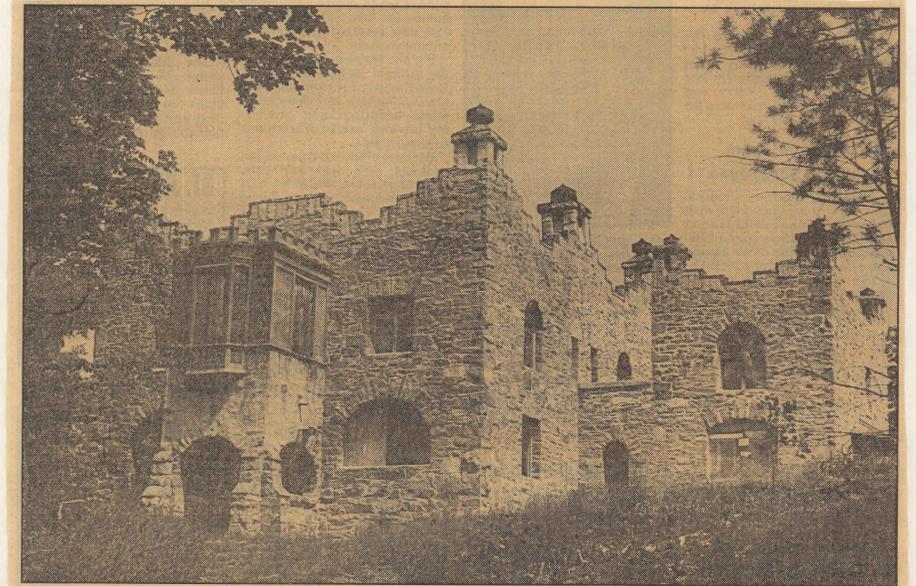
The castle was built as a family home by Benjamin Ames Kimball, a Dartmouth College graduate who spent his adult life in railroads, from a Concord Railroad employee, then foreman and master mechanic, to owner of the Concord

and Montreal Railroad. Building a spur line from Lakeport to Dover, he changed the company name to Concord, Montreal and Lakeshore and rode to Concord to work in a private rail car.

Stone for the castle was quarried on Locke's Hill and about one-third of the grounds was landscaped. Steps descending to Lake Winnepesaukee 800 feet below were built and the castle was painted white in 1906.

Kimball lived in the castle until he died in 1920, a year after the death of their son, Henry. His wife and Henry's widow then lived there, the younger woman using the castle as a summer residence until she died in 1960, leaving it to the Mary Mitchell Wildlife Foundation.

It was offered for sale at \$100,000 at that time but has had little use since. An open house one August weekend in 1964, organized by Hector Bol-duc, now a priest, attracted over ten thousand visitors.



Paula Tracy/Union Leader

KIMBALL CASTLE in Gilford is for sale.

Gilford's Decrepit Kimball Castle For Sale To Fund Wildlife Sanctuary

Town Needs Money To Create Preserve Stipulated in Trust

By PAULA TRACY
Union Leader Staff

GILFORD — Kimball Castle is being offered for sale by the board of selectmen with the intent that proceeds go to fund a 253-acre wildlife sanctuary on the property.

The aging stone fortress off Locke's Hill Road, built at the turn of the century by railroad magnate Benjamin Ames Kimball, has become a source of concern for both residents and police.

The castle, with its caretaker's house, carriage house, ice house and 265 acres of hillside overlooking Lake Winnepesaukee, was left in a trust by Kimball's daughter-in-law in 1960 with the stipulation that the land be used to promote wildlife conservation.

According to Town Administrator David Caron, that cannot now be done because there is no money in the trust.

The trust was primarily the unoccupied buildings and property, initially left with the Mary Mitchell Humane Foundation, based in Boston. But when it was discovered by the state Attorney General's Office that the foundation was looking to subdivide the property, selectmen voted for acceptance of the trusteeship in 1978.

In the following year, voters at town meeting agreed to accept the property, "To maintain an open area" but with the stipulation that no town funds be used for its upkeep.

Police Chief Evans Juris indicated the property been a source for wildlife but the unlawful type.

In the past six weeks, he said, he has taken at least 11 people into custody for violating the posted "no trespassing" signs by

entering the old castle. "It's considered a safety hazard," he said.

Caron said it would not be violating the spirit of the trust to level the ornate structure, "But the residents of the town want to see that castle restored."

He said since the mid 1980s, the town has tried to attract a person or a company to restore the castle - perhaps for use as a museum - and maintain the spirit of the trust by preserving the surrounding property.

"We've found it's a tall order that people aren't willing to fill," said Caron.

Now that the town and the Attorney General's Office recognize it would be difficult to get someone to do this, the town is proposing to subdivide 13 acres with the buildings and use the proceeds to set up a trust for the land maintenance.

He said the Attorney General's Office - which oversees all charitable trusts in the state - has agreed to recommend the move to the Belknap County Superior Court once a buyer is found.

William Cullimore, director of charitable trusts at the Attorney General's Office, said there was still some work to be done before the matter goes to court.

"The principle problem the trust has is that the land was given to the trustees but there is no trust fund to support the activities on the land," he said. "This is basically a last ditch effort to create a fund by the transfer of a part of the land which has the castle itself on it... so that a fund can be established."

Asked if selling even a portion of the property is violating the spirit of the trust, Cullimore said the courts have developed

the doctrine of cy pres to modify trusts when original purposes can't be carried out.

"That appears to be case here. I can't see into what was in her head. Was that her specific intent? It's quite evident from events of the last 20 years, its impossible to carry out the purposes she might have wished," without a separate trust fund for the upkeep of the land.

The house itself has been vacant for about 30 years, and it shows visible signs of deterioration. The grand ballroom has a pile of beer bottles and broken mortar and wood. The windows have all been broken out. Even the trees have grown up to block the view. But beautiful hand detail on the wood and magnificent doors and stonework remain.

Caron said the property has been advertised regionally and nationally for about two weeks. He said he has had six inquiries, primarily from people looking to use the property as an inn or bed and breakfast, or as a private residence. He said he has shown the house twice.

The property has no sale price attached, but the board of selectmen has obtained an appraisal which they are keeping secret, Caron said.

He said the town is accepting requests for proposals until Aug. 6 and will then review them to see if they have a buyer.

With the money from the sale, Caron said it is hoped that the town can make nature paths up the hillside overlooking the lake and that forestry techniques can be applied to maximize wildlife habitat and use.

He said that the trust allowed for a public use of the land and, thus, it would be open to the public.

New Hampshire town is trying to unload a castle

By FRANK BAKER
Associated Press Writer

GILFORD, N.H. (AP) — Looking for a home that's a little out of the ordinary? Not afraid of a little work? Then get over to Gilford, where the town is trying to unload a castle.

But don't wait; bidding on the estate ends Monday.

The 2,500-square-foot, medieval-style Kimball Castle, built at the turn of the century by Concord businessman Ames Kimball, hasn't been lived in since 1960 and has fallen into disrepair. Estimates put repair costs at \$450,000.

Town administrator David Caron hopes someone will take Gilford's white elephant off the town's hands. But he's not holding his breath.

"We hope to get some bids," he said, "but I wouldn't be surprised if we don't get any."

Caron said the town has advertised the castle nationally, but to no avail.

"We list it under 'castle' in the classifieds," he said. "If anything's going to catch someone's eye, that should."

The requirements for the buyer are simple: make a reasonable offer and have the financial means to restore the castle. He said the castle could be

used as a residence, restaurant, bed-and-breakfast or any of a number of other things.

The 2½-story, granite castle and its surrounding property includes a carriage house, caretaker's house, stone gazebo and several other buildings. Before trees grew up around it, the castle afforded a magnificent view of Lake Winnepesaukee and the White Mountains.

The grounds now are overgrown with tall grass and other vegetation, and the winding driveway that leads to the main entrance is blocked by a fallen tree. The castle itself appears structurally sound, but vandals and the elements have taken their toll.

Inside, there are five bedrooms, five fireplaces and a magnificent skylight in the main room. The oak and spruce woodwork looks as good as new in places, but much of it has been marked by teen-agers who through the years have used the structure for parties and other gatherings.

The vandalism has subsided since the town offered the caretaker's house to anyone who would keep an eye on the property. One of the town's police dispatchers lives there now.

The castle was built from 1897-99 and was designed after castles Kim-



Gilford officials are trying to sell the Kimball Castle, a 2,500-square-foot, stone, structure was built at the turn of the century and are taking bids from interested parties. The 2,500-square-foot, stone, structure was built at the turn of the century and needs extensive repairs.

The castle sits on 250 acres, but only 13 acres come with it. The town plans to use money from the sale to turn the remaining acreage into a wildlife habitat that would be open to the public.

Kimball, who was president of the Boston and Montreal Railroad, used the castle as a summer home until he died in 1920, when it was turned over to his wife and their daughter, Charlotte Atkinson Kimball.

Charlotte Kimball deeded 125 acres to the Mary Mitchell Humane Foundation in 1957. The remaining property and castle were given to the foundation in 1959. Charlotte Kimball died a year later.

The castle and grounds were put on the market by the foundation for \$100,000 in 1960, but there were no takers.

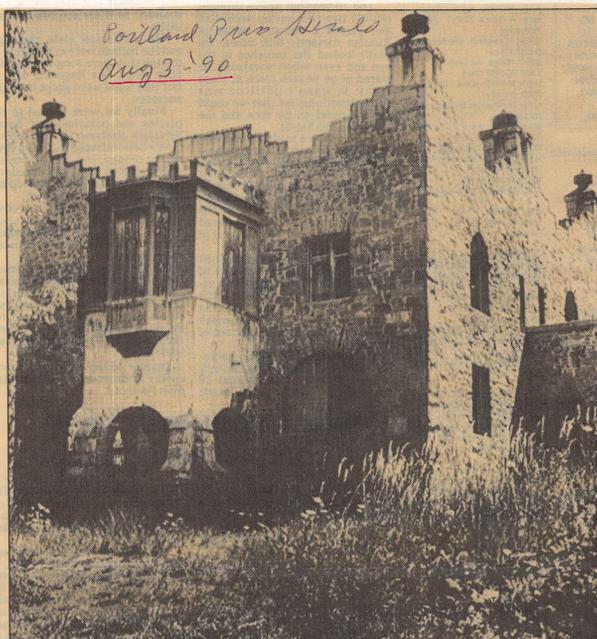
The town took over the property in 1980, but the state attorney general's office stipulated that the property couldn't be used for residential, commercial or industrial use because of a request by Charlotte Kimball.

However, the attorney general's office agreed within the past two years that property surrounding the castle could be used for other purposes, clearing the way for a sale, the town hoped.

Caron said the state's sluggish real estate market and the region's floundering economy have hampered the sale, along with the castle's condition.



Benj. Kimball lived in the castle.



Gilford, N.H., officials are seeking bidders for Kimball Castle, a 2,500-square-foot structure built at the turn of the century.

N.H. town tries to unload a castle in need of care

GILFORD, N.H. (AP) — Looking for a home that's a little out of the ordinary? Not afraid of a little work? Then get over to Gilford, where the town is trying to unload a castle.

But don't wait; bidding on the estate ends Monday.

The 2,500-square-foot, medieval-style Kimball Castle, built at the turn of the century by Concord businessman and railroad magnate Benjamin Ames Kimball, hasn't been lived in since 1960 and has fallen into disrepair. Estimates put repair costs at \$450,000.

Town administrator David Caron hopes someone will take Gilford's white elephant off the town's hands. But he's not holding his breath.

"We hope to get some bids," he said, "but I wouldn't be surprised if we don't get any."

Caron said the town has advertised the castle nationally, but to no avail.

"We list it under 'castle' in the classifieds," he said. "If anything's going to catch someone's eye, that should."

The requirements for the buyer are simple: make a reasonable offer and have the financial means to restore the castle. He said the castle could be used as a residence, restaurant, bed-and-breakfast or any of a number of other things.

The castle sits on 250 acres,

but only 13 acres come with it. The town plans to use money from the sale to turn the remaining acreage into a wildlife habitat that would be open to the public.

The 2½-story, granite castle and its surrounding property includes a carriage house, caretaker's house, stone gazebo and several other buildings. Before trees grew up around it, the castle afforded a magnificent view of Lake Winnepesaukee and the White Mountains.

The grounds now are overgrown with tall grass and other vegetation, and the winding driveway that leads to the main entrance is blocked by a fallen tree. The castle itself appears structurally sound, but vandals and the elements have taken their toll.

Inside, there are five bedrooms, five fireplaces and a magnificent skylight in the main room. The oak and spruce woodwork looks as good as new in places, but much of it has been marked by teen-agers who through the years have used the structure for parties and other gatherings.

The vandalism has subsided since the town offered the caretaker's house to anyone who would keep an eye on the property. One of the town's police dispatchers lives there now.

The castle was built from 1897-99 and was designed after castles Kimball, who was president of the Boston and Montreal Railroad, used the castle as a summer home until he died in 1920, when it was turned over to his wife and their daughter, Charlotte Atkinson Kimball.

Charlotte Kimball deeded 125 acres to the Mary Mitchell Humane Foundation in 1957. The remaining property and castle were given to the foundation in 1959. Charlotte Kimball died a year later.

The castle and grounds were put on the market by the foundation for \$100,000 in 1960, but there were no takers.

The town took over the property in 1980, but the state attorney general's office stipulated that the property couldn't be used for residential, commercial or industrial use because of a request by Charlotte Kimball.

However, the attorney general's office agreed within the past two years that property surrounding the castle could be used for other purposes, clearing the way for a sale, the town hoped.

Caron said the state's sluggish real estate market and the region's floundering economy have hampered a sale, along with the castle's condition.

The Kimball Family Association
Newsletter
Vol. 22 No. 1 Page 4-5
November 1990

LATEST NEWS ON KIMBALL CASTLE

We realize some of our newer readers will not know the background on Kimball Castle, located in Gilford, New Hampshire, so, very quickly we'll give you some background information.

Benjamin KIMBALL, of Concord, NH, was a railroad tycoon in the late 19th century. There were many in NH; their role in the state's government is told in novels by Winston Churchill (an American author, not the British PM). KIMBALL "became enamored of a castle he saw while traveling down Germany's Rhine River. In 1899, he built an exact reproduction on a Gilford hill as a summer home." I might add that it overlooks Lake Winnepesaukee, and the view from his hilltop is magnificent.

Benjamin KIMBALL died in 1920, and his wife and daughter-in-law continued to use the castle until the latter's death in 1960. There were no direct heirs and the castle and 280 acres of land were donated to several charitable trusts in the Boston area in the hopes of making the property a permanent nature preserve.

However, the various trusts differed in their plans for the property and in 1979 the town of Gilford asked the NH Attorney General to step in. Gilford became the sole trustee. Unfortunately, while all the lawyers argued, vandals stepped in and helped themselves. The furnishings are gone, the mortar has cracked and fallen away, and whole sections of the walls are collapsed. Now the town of Gilford wishes to sell the property.

For \$465,000 anyone can have a castle of his own; but he must agree to restore it for about that amount. Last year the town of Gilford turned down two bids - one for \$1,000 and another for \$41,000 for the castle and 13 acres of land. A second round of bidding was concluded recently with two more bids being received - one for \$1000.00 and a proposal to turn the castle into an educational institution. The other was for \$91,000, and this proposal calls for a bed and breakfast inn. If neither proposal was accepted by the town, KIMBALL Castle will go out to bid again.

We truly hope someone with the money - and the taste to do a good job - finally purchases the poor, delapidated castle before weather, time and further vandalism makes any effort useless. We say not have railroad "barons" any longer, but all of us have some streak of romanticism, however small, and any KIMBALL would be pleased to have it known there is castle with the family name attached.

Town Continuing Talks With Two Kimball Castle Bidders

GILFORD — Talks between the two bidders for purchase of Kimball's Castle on Route 11 and town administrator David Caron will continue.

Selectmen, meeting Wednesday, directed Caron to continue to get detailed information about plans for the castle from Waterloom Studios and Wess Chauncey of Sanbornton, who bid \$1,000 to buy the castle and grounds, planning to restore them, and John A. Andrews Companies of Sterling, Va., which offered \$41,000 and would open a bed and breakfast there and use the facilities also for wedding receptions and other events.

After opening the two bids Aug. 6, selectmen decided to get more details on both bidders' plans within two weeks.

Yesterday they decided to hold off on re-advertising for bids, department secretary Cynthia Cote said.

In other action, selectmen accepted Ronald Tougas's resignation from the Parks and Recreation Commission and named Tom Koxk in his place. Koxk has not held public office previously in Gilford.

The board also talked with Police Chief Evans Juris about changes he had proposed in departmental rules to conform to recent changes in legislation, voting to accept Juris's proposal.

Cote said the board also "clarified" a March 8, 1989, decision on the Gunstock Acres Village District, when it had been proposed to add two lots.

Gilford Wants To Sell 'Handyman's Special' Castle

By ROGER AMSDEN
Union Leader Correspondent

GILFORD — For sale: one castle, handyman's special. That is how a real estate ad would describe Kimball Castle, which town officials hope to sell.

Selectmen this week decided to seek new bids on the castle, which is badly in need of repair, and have set an Oct. 10 deadline for submission of proposals for use of the 19th century landmark.

Whoever buys the castle is facing a \$435,000 repair bill. That is what an engineering

study estimates it will cost to restore the castle.

Town Administrator David Caron said the decision to seek new bids was made by selectmen after he reported to them on a discussion he had with the charitable trust division of the Attorney General's Office. The castle and 265 acres of surrounding property are held in trust by the town but there is no money left in the trust.

The castle was built by Boston and Maine Railroad magnate Benjamin Ames Kimball just before the turn of the century. It was left in trust to the Boston-

based Mary Mitchell Humane Foundation by Kimball's daughter-in-law in 1960 with the stipulation it be used for wildlife conservation.

When the Attorney General's Office found out in 1979 that the foundation was looking to subdivide the property, selectmen voted to accept trusteeship.

Voters approved acceptance of the property at town meeting the following year to maintain an open area but stipulated that no town funds be used. The town has been trying since the mid-1980s, without success, to find someone who

would restore the castle in keeping with the original spirit of the trust.

The crux of the problem is that since there is no money to manage the property, the terms of the trust cannot be carried out. With this in mind selectmen obtained the consent of the Attorney General's Office to subdivide 13 acres which contain the castle and other buildings, and try to find a buyer for it. The remaining 250 acres will be maintained as a town conservation area.

If such an arrangement is made, the state and the town will

attempt to persuade the Belknap County Superior Court that it is an acceptable modification of the original terms of the trust.

One of the proposals considered by selectmen would have turned the castle into a bed and breakfast establishment. The other proposed restoration as a museum.

But many people expressed interest in the castle after the first deadline passed, Caron said. These people will be contacted and informed of the new deadline, he said.

Selectmen hoped to award the bid in time for a developer to

start work this fall so that the castle can be protected from further damage during the winter. Some of the granite blocks are cracked and could become more of a problem if water gets into the cracks and freezes.

The Kimball Castle Committee, which has for several years been studying possible uses of the castle and surrounding property, was reactivated to develop recommendations. Its report urged selectmen to consider leasing the castle, rather than outright sale.

Caron said the leasing option can only be explored if the sale option doesn't work out.

Gilford Gets Two Bids for Kimball Castle

Oct. SEPT. 1990
Educational Center, Bed and Breakfast Proposed for 19th Century Landmark

By ROGER AMSDEN
Union Leader Correspondent

GILFORD — Only two bids were received this week for a 19th century landmark castle which the town hopes to sell.

Town Administrator Dave Caron said the proposals received in the second round of bids for Kimball Castle were very similar to those received in the first round.

Guy Rickkind of Chaplin, Conn., bid \$1,000 to use the castle as an educational center and William Owen of Foxboro, Mass., submitted a \$51,000 proposal for a bed and breakfast establishment.

prospective buyers in recent months. Estimated repairs to the castle carry a \$435,000 price tag and Caron said that given the economic conditions, the cost could have been seen as prohibitive by prospective bidders.

Caron said selectmen will be examining the bids when they meet next week and that he will be continuing his discussions with the Charitable Trust Division of the New Hampshire Attorney General's Office on the fate of the castle.

The castle and 265 acres of surrounding property are held in trust by the town but there is no money left in the trust. The castle was built by Boston and Maine Railroad magnate Benjamin Ames Kimball just before the turn of the century. It was left in trust in 1960 to the Boston-based Mary

Mitchell Humane Foundation by Kimball's daughter-in-law with the stipulation it be used for wildlife conservation.

The town assumed trusteeship of the castle in 1979 and has been trying since the mid-1980s to find someone who would restore the castle.

Selectmen have obtained the consent of the Attorney General's Office to subdivide the 13 acres of the property which contain the castle and other buildings, and try to find a buyer. The remaining 250 acres of the property will be maintained as a town conservation area.

The Kimball Castle Committee, which has for several years been studying possible uses of the castle and surrounding property, has urged selectmen to consider leasing the castle, rather than selling it.

BELKNAP CENTRAL → Center Harbor, Gilford, Laconia, Meredith

Town Negotiating With Developer On Castle Project

by Roger Amsden
GILFORD - Two men who have a successful track record in historic preservation...

Don Leavitt and Rick Miller of Bear Island Restorations in Meredith say the project may cost \$1.5 million and take two years to complete...

Leavitt said that the restored castle would become a top-notch tourist attraction and that it would preserve a bit of New Hampshire history...

It was built by railroad magnate Benjamin Ames Kimball around the turn of the century and was left in trust by Kimball's daughter in 1960...

Town Administrator Dave Caron said

the Bear Island Renovations was chosen based on its experience in renovating the Red Hill Inn in Center Harbor...

Caron said the plan proposed by the developers will satisfy the town's twin goals of preserving the castle and using the surrounding land as a conservation area.

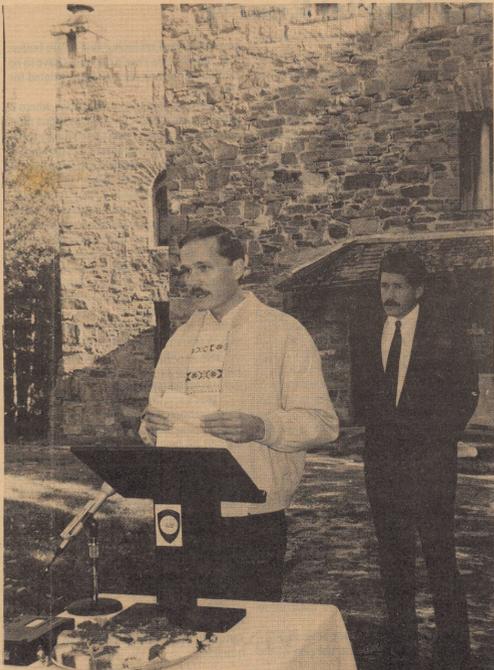
Leavitt said that he and his partner successfully restored all six buildings on the 60-acre Red Hill estate in Center Harbor...

They propose to create a country inn with 15 guest rooms, as well as a 100-seat restaurant with a small lounge.

Leavitt said the restored castle property would also be linked into a network of cross-country ski trails...

He said a feasibility study will be conducted to make sure the castle's stone walls are capable of being restored.

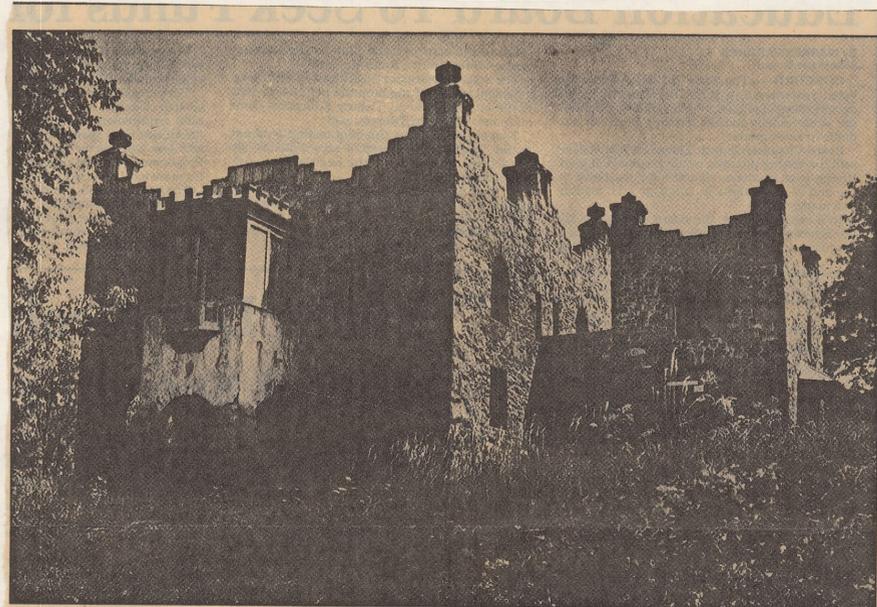
Leavitt said if the study looks good, a fund-raising drive will be launched for the project.



Don Leavitt explains plans for turning Kimball Castle into a country inn and restaurant as Gilford administrator Dave Caron watches.

Roger Amsden photo

THE UNION LEADER, Manchester, N.H. — Thursday, August 6, 1992



HISTORIC KIMBALL CASTLE may be restored as an inn and restaurant, developers from Bear Island Restoration in Meredith say.

Kimball Castle's Developers Await Decision on Restoration

By ROGER AMSDEN, Union Leader Correspondent

GILFORD — It may take another two years and as much as \$2 million, but Don Leavitt of Bear Island Restorations in Meredith is confident that historic Kimball Castle can be restored as an inn and restaurant.

Leavitt said the decision on whether to proceed to the next phase of the project will be made by the end of the month...

Leavitt and his partner, Rick Miller, recently moved the old Lakeport railroad station to a temporary location at the Laconia Airport in Gilford.

bring it to the castle grounds once an agreement is reached for a plan on its development with the town of Gilford...

The castle was built nearly 100 years ago by railroad magnate Benjamin Ames Kimball...

Leavitt said the railroad station will provide three extra guest rooms, bringing the total at the castle site to 20 rooms.

Leavitt and Miller propose to create an inn and a 100-seat restaurant with a small lounge.

create an inn and a 100-seat restaurant with a small lounge. An addition would be constructed on the south side of the castle...

He said other buildings on the property would be restored for guest rooms and trees near the crest of the hill would be thinned to open up the view of the lake and mountains.

The town negotiated an agreement earlier this year with Leavitt and Miller for development of the castle and the 13 acres of land surrounding it.

If the developer and the town agree on a development plan, Bear Island Restorations will have 18 months to come up with the money for the project.

Because the structure is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, great care must be taken with the restoration...

"We will have to stay within some very strict standards when it comes to the design," said Leavitt.

Bear Island Restorations was chosen by the town for the renovation project based on its experience in renovating the Red Hill Inn in Center Harbor.

Lakeport Railroad Station Eyed For Relocation to Kimball Castle

By PAULA TRACY, Union Leader Staff

LACONIA — The company that restored Red Hill Inn in Center Harbor and the Plymouth Theatre is now interested in saving another Lakes Region structure, the Lakeport Railroad Station.

Don Leavitt, president of Bear Island Restorations, said a feasibility study is being conducted to see whether the railroad station can be restored and relocated to the site of the company's most recent undertaking, the rebuilding of Kimball Castle in Gilford.

Leavitt and his partner, Rick Miller, signed an option agreement with the castle's trustees, the town of Gilford, to take over the castle and make it into a country inn and restaurant.

"There is not enough space (in the castle) for as many guest rooms as we would like," said Leavitt. "Rather than build a new building we thought of relocating the train station to make it into a guest house."

Benjamin Kimball, who built the castle overlooking Lake Winnepesaukee, was president of the railroad company that operated the line through Lakeport...

"We're just doing studies right now and it might not even be feasible, but we are interested," he said.

Bear Island Restorations is in a six-month study period to see if it is viable to restore the castle and the railroad station...

The city of Laconia has been looking to unload the railroad station for the past two years, under pressure from Lakeport



Paula Tracy/Union Leader

THE LAKEPORT RAILROAD STATION may be restored and relocated.

residents who consider it unsightly. It has been sitting on blocks in Lakeport Square since it was moved from its original site across the street several years ago.

Laconia City Manager Daniel E. McKeever recommended at the city council meeting last night that the council delay plans to demolish the structure.

"It is more advantageous to the city to have a private party purchase and move the station than for the city to incur the expense of its demolition."

The city has tried on several occasions to advertise the railroad station for sale, with few takers.

Leavitt said the railroad station has many of the original, old woodwork details and is structurally sound.

"It's the perfect space," Leavitt said. "We've asked (Laconia) to give us several months to look into it," noting that if it appears that it would work, the company might be able to move it by the fall.

The company has had success bringing a number of area structures back from disrepair, most notably the Red Hill Inn, an old summer estate overlooking Squam Lake.

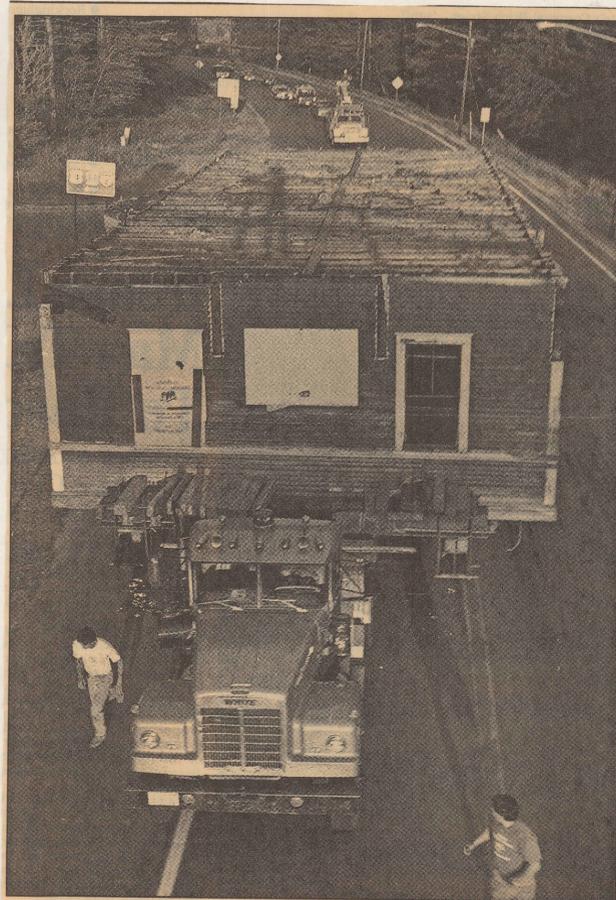
abandoned for many years before Bear Island completed restoration work in 1985.

The company also restored Plymouth Theatre in the late 1980s to its original 1930s style, with the exception of a wall placed down the middle to allow two movies to be shown at once.

Bear Island faces a number of hurdles before the castle is restored in a similar manner to the Red Hill Inn.

On Friday at 9 a.m., a Belknap County Superior Court judge will be asked to amend the trust which would allow the trustees — the town of Gilford — to subdivide the castle area from a sizable tract of land which will be left as a wildlife sanctuary...

The Union Leader, Manchester, NH Thursday, July 23, 1992



RAILROAD STATION ON THE ROAD — The former Lakeport Railroad station, minus its roof, is moved along Rte. 11 in Gilford to its temporary resting place at the Laconia Airport.

Roger Amsden Photo

Kimball Wildlife Forest Hiking Trail Now Open

By ROGER AMSDEN, Union Leader Correspondent

GILFORD — A new hiking trail into the 280-acre Kimball Wildlife Forest offers spectacular views of Lake Winnepesaukee and provides an educational experience as well.

The nearly two-mile long trail is a wildlife habitat demonstration area. Interpretive stations along the self-guided trail provide information on the relationship between the natural habitat and the wildlife in the area.

The area is home to numerous wildlife species, including songbirds such as vireos and warblers, pileated woodpeckers, white-tailed deer, the red fox, ruffed grouse and red-tail hawks.

There are two sections to the trail, the 65-mile Lakeview Trail to the Lockes Hill beacon and the 1.15-mile Quarry Trail, which passes through an area where

granite was quarried for the construction of Kimball Castle in the 1890s.

The forest is part of the Kimball estate, and a separate 13-acre section where the castle stands may be developed as a restaurant and bed and breakfast attraction by Bear Island Restorations of Meredith.

A newly-constructed parking area at the foot of the trail on Route 11 provides ample parking for hikers.

To reach the forest from Interstate 93, take Exit 20 and follow Route 3-11 north, taking the Laconia bypass at the Belknap Mall to Route 11 in Gilford. The trail is about 3 miles beyond the Laconia Airport. From Alton, take Route 11 north. The trailhead is about 13 miles from the Alton traffic circle where Route 28 and Route 11 intersect.

Kimball Wildlife Forest Hiking Trail Now Open

By ROGER AMSDEN, Union Leader Correspondent 7-5-92

GILFORD — A new hiking trail into the 280-acre Kimball Wildlife Forest offers spectacular views of Lake Winnepesaukee and provides an educational experience as well.

The nearly two-mile long trail is a wildlife habitat demonstration area. Interpretive stations along the self-guided trail provide information on the relationship between the natural habitat and the wildlife in the area.

The area is home to numerous wildlife species, including songbirds such as vireos and warblers, pileated woodpeckers, white-tailed deer, the red fox, ruffed grouse and red-tail hawks.

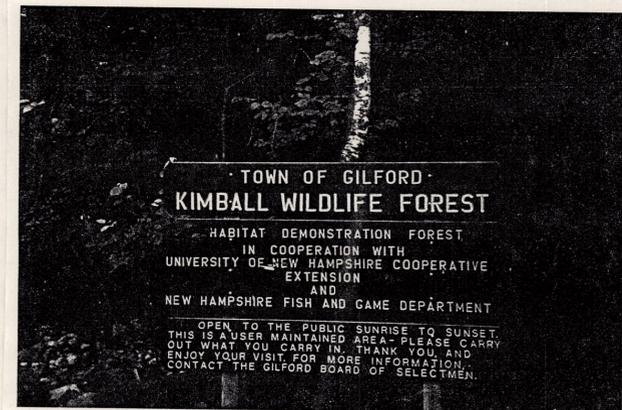
There are two sections to the trail, the 65-mile Lakeview Trail to the Lockes Hill beacon and the 1.15-mile Quarry Trail, which passes through an area where

granite was quarried for the construction of Kimball Castle in the 1890s.

The forest is part of the Kimball estate, and a separate 13-acre section where the castle stands may be developed as a restaurant and bed and breakfast attraction by Bear Island Restorations of Meredith.

A newly-constructed parking area at the foot of the trail on Route 11 provides ample parking for hikers.

To reach the forest from Interstate 93, take Exit 20 and follow Route 3-11 north, taking the Laconia bypass at the Belknap Mall to Route 11 in Gilford. The trail is about 3 miles beyond the Laconia Airport. From Alton, take Route 11 north. The trailhead is about 13 miles from the Alton traffic circle where Route 28 and Route 11 intersect.



CONNECTIONS: Newsletter of the Kimball Family Association, Vol. 24 No. 4, Vol. 25 No. 1, Aug-Nov 1993, Page 5

KIMBALL CASTLE: In 1990 the selectmen of the town of Gilford appointed a "Kimball Castle Committee," with a charge to address the "Remaining Land" at the Castle. This included all the land of the property with the exception of about 13 acres directly surrounding the Castle. During this time, too, a timber sale has been conducted, with a completion date set for spring of 1994. Despite stories and rumors that the Castle itself will become a Bed and Breakfast or a restaurant, nothing has been completed there. With a bad economic climate in the state and cost estimates running into six figures, this is probably not a surprise. As usual, we will be monitoring newspapers for anything of interest happening there. For new Association members who may not have heard of Kimball Castle, it was built by a Concord, NH, Kimball, after he had seen and been impressed by castles along the Rhine. He lived in it, as did his daughter, but the property became involved in litigation after the daughter's death and the Castle allowed to fall into disrepair. Its location is superb, on high ground overlooking Lake Winnepesaukee, in central New Hampshire (that very large blob of blue in the middle of the state map).

Indications Good For Purchase Of Kimball Castle

By PETE WELBURN
Staff Writer

GILFORD — The prospective purchasers of Kimball Castle said they will officially decide by the end of the month whether or not to exercise their option to purchase the property.

However, Town Administrator David Caron said developers have informed him they are planning to exercise their option to purchase the property at the Aug. 26 selectmen's meeting.

Don Leavitt and Rick Miller of Bear Island Restorations completed their feasibility study of restoring the site Thursday and will be given 30 days to make a decision.

"We still have a few more things to iron out," Leavitt said Friday.

The developers were concerned with the castle's stonework and the cost of repairing crumbling sections of the structure when they started the study, but are encouraged by the results of the project.

"We had a very good stone mason go up and look it over," Leavitt said. "The study looks great at the moment."

The developers have 30 days to pay a \$5,000 fee to the town

CASTLE, Page 12

●CASTLE

□ FROM PAGE 1 □

to secure the purchase of the castle land 13 acres of land on Lockes Hill, Caron said.

They will also have to give a detailed report of the costs of restoration and a report on the structural integrity of the structure when, and if, they

officially decide to purchase the castle, Caron said.

After the \$5,000 non-refundable payment is made, Leavitt and Miller will be given 18 months to raise the funds to purchase the castle for approximately \$100,000.

"I'm optimistic," Leavitt said. "I think at the end of the month we'll officially decide."

Kimball Castle Project Going Forward

By PETE WELBURN
Staff Writer

GILFORD — Developers who are interested in restoring Kimball Castle and turning it into a restaurant and inn presented a \$5,000 non-refundable deposit to the selectmen today and will be given 18 months to raise the money to purchase the property.

"All things considered the castle's in pretty good shape," Don Leavitt of Bear Island Restorations said at the selectmen's meeting this morning.

The total basic restoration cost of restoring the castle is \$326,835, according to Leavitt. In January, officials expected restoring the castle could cost as much as \$1.5 million.

Of the cost, \$468,635 will be used to fund restoration of rooms in the castle, \$201,200 to construct an adequate roadway and parking lot at the site, \$112,000 for a sewerage hookup and \$45,000 for a water hookup, according to Leavitt.

The selectmen were happy Leavitt and Rick Miller, Leavitt's



Members of the Gilford Board of Selectmen, top right, and Town Administrator Dave Caron, bottom right, discuss the Kimball Castle sale with Don

Leavitt, bottom left, Rick Miller of Bear Island Restorations and Amy Mattlage, 10, of Tilton. (Citizen Photo/Pete Welburn)

CASTLE, Page 10

●CASTLE

□ FROM PAGE 3 □

business partner, decided to go forward with the project and attempt to raise the funds.

"This is great," Chairman Gordon Weymouth said. "We're going to have a lot of happy people around town. I think we as a board are delighted."

The next step in the process will be the fundraising, Town Administrator Dave Caron said. He added Bear Island Restoration will be given 18 months to raise the funds to restore the castle.

"Hopefully, we'll be finished before then," Leavitt said.

Amy Mattlage, 10, of Tilton also attended the meeting and joined the selectmen, Leavitt and Miller when they were discussing the project today.

Mattlage's great, great uncle was member of the Kimball family who owned and built the castle and she did not want to see the castle destroyed.

She had written a letter to the

selectmen asking them to find someone to purchase the property and has been attending selectmen's meetings to discover the fate of the castle.

"If Kimball Castle is destroyed, I will be sad," Mattlage had written to the board, Weymouth recalled.

This morning she presented Leavitt and Miller with a copy of the Kimball family's Coat of Arms.

Mattlage was also happy Leavitt and Miller decided to press on in their quest to restore the property and use it as a restaurant and a 15 to 20 room inn.

"I'm very happy," Mattlage said.

Gilford Students Learn About Kimball Castle

By PETE WELBURN
Staff Writer

GILFORD — The young lords and ladies of the fifth-grade class at Gilford Elementary School made a field trip from the school to Kimball Castle Tuesday to learn about the castle's history and the surrounding nature trails.

Sandra T. McGonagle, the chairman of the Kimball Castle committee, led the students up the steep winding driveway that led to the castle.

The 90 students gathered at the base of the towering structure at 10:30 a.m. and met with Don Leavitt of Bear Island Restorations, the company that is restoring the county landmark.

The site has been damaged by vandals over the years. The windows are all boarded up and the cement between the castle's tan stonework is splintered in many places.

Leavitt encouraged the students to use their good imaginations to picture what the restored castle will look like once it is completed.

"All the stonework is going to be just as pretty as it was when it was built," Leavitt told the students. "This is going to be the prettiest place of all the places around."

A parking lot will be hidden

on the side of the hill the castle sits on and a swimming pool will be added, Leavitt explained.

The trees surrounding the castle will be trimmed, so people will be able to see Lake Winnepesaukee from the castle, he continued.

A roofed platform built of gray stone and located yards from the castle will be the "perfect place to get married," Leavitt said.

The developers also plan to reopen to old walkways that surrounded the castle and are hoping the gardens and flowers that line them will grow back again after the area is cleaned up, he said.

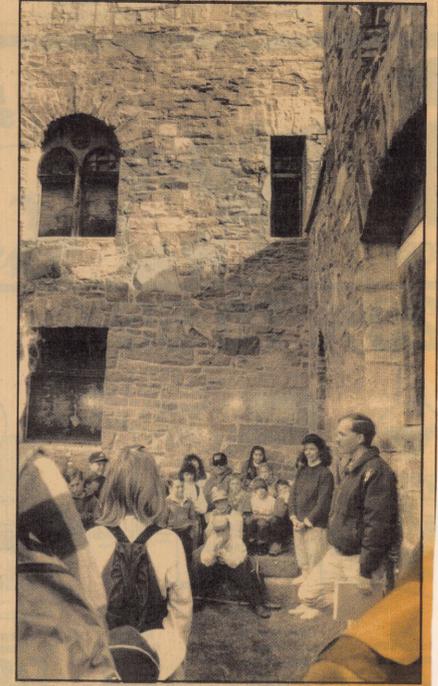
"I can't take you inside because it's really beat up," Leavitt told the students, many who had gathered at the door of the castle as they arrived.

"It's all kind of beatup. It's really dirty. When I get it fixed up more, then we can take you inside."

The castle was built about 1895, Leavitt said. He and his partner, Rick Miller, plan to raise over \$2 million to fix up the property and buildings on the site.

"We've made some good contacts," Leavitt said.

CASTLE, Page 8



A group of fifth graders from Gilford Elementary School listen to Don Leavitt of Bear Island Restorations talks about Kimball Castle during a field trip for the students Tuesday. Standing next to Leavitt is Sandra McGonagle who teaches at the school. (Citizen Photo/Pete Welburn)

●CASTLE

□ FROM PAGE 3 □

The developers have been given 18 months by the town to raise the funds to finance the project. Leavitt hopes to finish the project in two years and estimated staying in the castle would cost vacationers \$125 per

night once the renovations are complete.

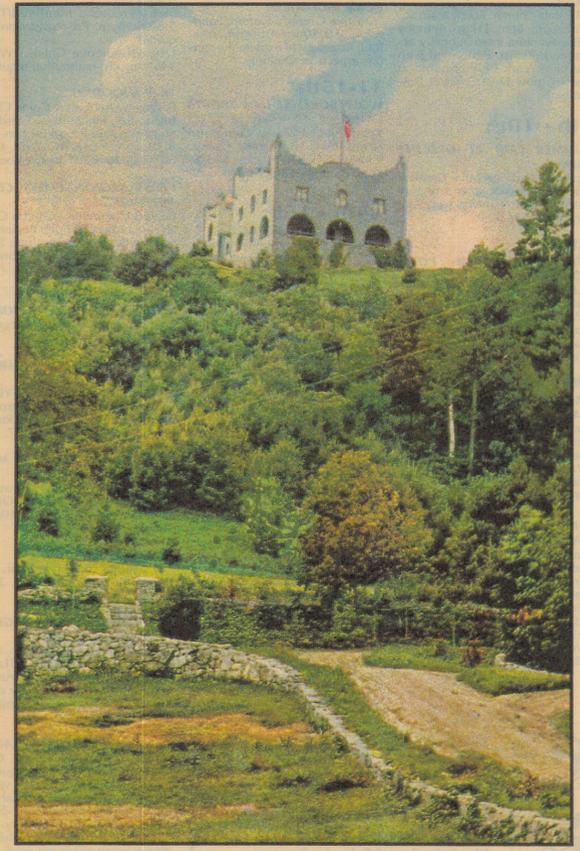
There will also be a restaurant called "Kimball Castle," added to the castle, Leavitt said.

After Leavitt's talk, the young lords and ladies of the elementary school continued their pilgrimage down the Lockes Hill Trails.



THE WEIRS TIMES
AND TOURISTS' GAZETTE
DEVOTED TO THE INTERESTS OF LAKE WINNIPESAUKEE & VICINITY.

VOLUME 3, NO. 26 THE WEIRS, LAKE WINNIPESAUKEE, N.H., THURSDAY, JUNE 30, 1994 COMPLIMENTARY



KIMBALL'S CASTLE, BELKNAP POINT, LAKE WINNIPESAUKEE, NEW HAMPSHIRE. This imposing structure was built in 1897 by Benjamin Kimball of Boscawen, N.H. "This could become the premiere country inn in New England" says Don Leavitt of Bear Island Restorations.

Kimball's Castle

from Landmarks and Legacy
New Hampshire's Lakes Region
by Bruce D. Heald
Weirs Times Historian

It was in 1897 that Benjamin Kimball of Concord, president of the Boston-Montreal Railroad and President of the Kimball and Wright Wheel Mfg. Co., hired an architect to build his castle on Locke's Hill in Gilford, overlooking Lake Winnepesaukee.

Mr. Samuel L. Powers, of Boston, wrote the following in the early 1920s, of Benjamin Kimball:

Many years ago Mr. Kimball made his first trip up the German Rhine. As he sat upon the steamer's deck,

viewing the vine clad slopes on either side of the river, he finally came into view of the castles built by the Barons of the Middle Ages. It was then that the thought came to him that he would like to build a castle similar to those, upon a promontory which he owned on the southerly bank of Lake Winnepesaukee; so he made a landing, secured an architect, and arranged with him to make plans for a castle, which stands today some seven hundred feet above the lake. That castle is an exact reproduction of the one that he selected upon the banks of the Rhine.

Continued on Page 45

FROM THE PUBLISHER
This week we feature Kimball's Castle and wish Don Leavitt and Rick Miller the very best in their wonderful restoration project.
• Who was Benjamin Kimball? pg. 30
• Building Kimball's Castle. pg. 64

THE UNION LEADER, Manchester, N.H. — Tuesday, June 21, 1994

DON LEAVITT AND RICK MILLER review plans for a \$2.5 million restoration of historic Kimball Castle in Gilford. The castle will become a country inn with a 120-seat restaurant offering a commanding view of Lake Winnepesaukee.

Gilford Board Hears Plans for Castle

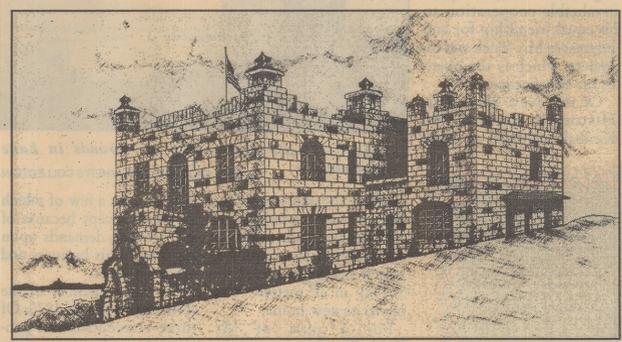
By ROGER AMSDEN
Union Leader Correspondent
GILFORD—Plans for a \$2.5 million restoration of historic Kimball Castle were presented to the Gilford Planning Board last night by Don Leavitt and Rick Miller of Bear Island Restorations.
The developers say they hope to complete the project, which would see a three-story, 6,000-square-foot addition built next to the century-old stone castle, by June 1 of next year.
Plans call for creation of 20 guest rooms at the site, four of which would be in the castle, four more in the addition, and the rest in several other buildings on the property, including the former Lakeport railroad station, which will be moved onto the 14-acre site.
The addition will house a lounge on its ground floor and a 120-seat restaurant on the second floor, with the third-floor guestrooms connected to the original castle by a corridor.
Leavitt and Miller, who restored the Red

Hill Inn in Center Harbor and the Plymouth Theatre, said the guest rooms and dining room will offer commanding views of Lake Winnepesaukee.
As part of the project a new \$750,000 access road will be built from Route 11 up Lockes Hill, where the castle is located, and terraced gardens below the castle will be restored.
Leavitt said a new parking area below the castle will be shielded from the view at the top of the hill and that up to three-quarters of the trees, which block the view of the lake once enjoyed by the original owners, will be removed.
He said the castle is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and that Bear Island Restorations will adhere to the national guidelines for restoration of historic structures in order to qualify for a 20 percent tax credit on the project.
The castle was built nearly 100 years ago by railroad magnate Benjamin Ames Kimball, president of the Boston-Montreal railroad.

The Lakeport Railroad station, built in 1901, was owned by the same rail line.
Leavitt says the railroad station building, currently stored at Laconia Airport, will provide three extra guest rooms, and that it will be placed behind the carriage house, enabling it blend in with the existing structures.
He said that when completed the castle could be "the premier country inn in New England."
The developers will pay \$100,000 to the town of Gilford, which owns the castle, and an additional \$1,500 each year for the next 50 years. The town negotiated an agreement two years ago with Leavitt and Miller for development of the castle and the 14 acres of land surrounding it.
The town took title to the castle and the 265-acre Benjamin Kimball estate in the late 1980s and has been trying to find a way to preserve the often vandalized structure since that time.

THE WEIRS TIMES, Thursday, June 30, 1994 45

KIMBALL'S CASTLE CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE...



KIMBALL'S CASTLE IN GILFORD, N.H.; 1907. CHARCOAL BY BRUCE D. HEALD

My belief is that the most joyous hours of his life were those spent during the summer season at this New Hampshire castle. I have seen Uncle Ben many times sitting in a large chair upon the broad veranda looking out through the arches at the view before him. On one occasion he said to me, "Where in the world can you find a more superb view, one that has greater diversity of scenery, than the one that lies before us?" It is a remarkable view, seven hundred feet below were the sparkling waters of Winnepesaukee, dotted with its hundreds of islands, each rich with summer verdure extending to the very water's edge. Farther to the north were the silvery waters of Lake Asquam, hedged in by the beautiful range of mountains - Chocorua, Passaconaway, Whiteface, and Sandwich Dome. Still farther to the north, the Presidential Range - Mount Washington in bold relief piercing the fleecy clouds. Farther to the west, Lafayette, Lincoln and Moosilauke, and still farther to the west the mountains of Vermont. To the east, beyond Ossipee, were the mountains on the westerly line of Maine, and to the south, Belknap and Gun-

stock, as though keeping guard over the castle. Upon the broad veranda Uncle Ben would not only discuss the beauty of the scene, but his breast swelled with pride as he recounted the history of New Hampshire and Old Dartmouth.
As we view this fine old castle we see that it is built entirely of top stones. These stones were quarried in Concord and brought to Laconia by train. From here they were transported up the hill by horse and oxen teams, as were the field stones and granite obtained in back of Locke's Hill. Italian masons were employed to do the work, during which time they were boarded on his steamer "Lady of the Lake" which was beached in Glendale and then disposed upon completion of the castle.
The approach to the castle was boarded with handsome blue spruce, and just beyond was the cottage for the caretaker, Lester DeRoche.
This castle has many similarities of a fort, commencing with its overall appearance and the heavy solid oak front door with wrought iron window grating, hinges, and lion's head door knocker.
All the exquisite oak woodwork was made in London and shipped to Bos-

ton via freighter and reassembled inside the castle. All wrought iron fixtures, at which the Germans excel, were custom-made in Germany. The handsome dining and living room furniture was elegantly carved of black cherry and oak, also made in Germany. Rooms in the castle included a large combination living dining room with picture windows overlooking the massive stone porch and breath-taking view of the lake; kitchen, pantry, four upstairs bedrooms with corner fireplaces; and a sewing room; as well as servants' quarters.
When Mrs. Kimball passed away in 1960, the estate was willed to the Alvord Wild Life Sanctuary of Bear Island. It was felt that if the public wished the castle and its 250 acre park of flowers and shrubs restored and preserved for their study, the society was the most likely to inherit this fine property for proper restoration.
After being abandoned for several years, the inevitable finally happened; vandalism! What could be carried, was stolen, windows broken, wrought iron that wasn't too heavy, removed; stacks of very rare green bullseye glass replacements from the windows, smashed; even the huge stone and wrought

iron gates five feet high, were eventually destroyed. Inside the castle, such items as a fine suit of armor, Egyptian pedestals in black ebony, and a one of a kind tapestry made for the 1892 93 Columbian Exposition, it was the first ever made on a powered loom and took better than two years of preparation. All these were taken.

It is an era past, but let us remember, affectionately, the by-gone years of what it must have really been like to enjoy the lake in the elegance and refinement of the steamboat years.

CASTLE RENOVATION PLAN UNVEILED

by Roger Amsden
News Correspondent

GILFORD - "This could become the premiere country inn in New England," said Don Leavitt of Bear Island Restorations of Meredith as he spoke with evident enthusiasm about the plans he and his partner Rick Miller have for a \$2.5 million restoration of historic Kimball's Castle.
"Everyone will want to have their wedding reception here," said Miller as he

pointed out what the castle grounds will look like and the commanding view which will be afforded of Lake Winnepesaukee from Lockes Hill.
Town officials have re-

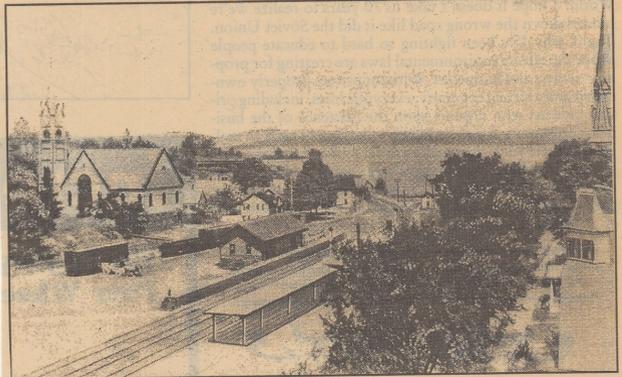
54
RENOVATION, from Page 1
viewed the plans and given them a good reception. Of particular importance to the town is the experience that Leavitt and Miller have in historic preservation, says

Dave Caron, Gilford town administrator.
"They have a good track record and it looks like if anyone is capable of putting this altogether and doing a good job it's these guys," he

said.
Bear Island successfully restored all six buildings on the 60-acre Red Hill estate in Center Harbor, where they now operate a country inn and restaurant, as well as the Plymouth movie theater.
The developers say they hope to complete the

and a 120-seat restaurant on the second floor, with the third floor guest rooms connected to the original castle by a corridor.
As part of the project a new \$750,000 access road will be built from Rte. 11 up Lockes Hill, where the castle is located, and terraced gar-

Leavitt says the railroad station building, currently stored at Laconia Airport, will provide three extra guest rooms, and that it will be placed behind the carriage house, enabling it blend in with the existing structures.
Bear Island will pay \$100,000 to town of Gilford,



The postcard view above shows part of the railroad station in Lakeport built in 1900 by the Boston & Maine Railroad. This building will be used at the soon to be restored Kimball's Castle. Opposite the station is the freight house with its long raised platform.

project, which will see a three-story, 6,000 square foot addition built next to the century-old stone castle, by June 1 of next year.
The castle itself will be carefully restored with the exterior sandblasted and crumbling mortar and bulging walls brought back to their original contours.
Plans call for creation of 20 guest rooms at the site, four of which would be in the castle, four more in the addition, and the rest in several other buildings on the property, including the former Lakeport railroad station, which will be moved onto the 14-acre site.
The addition will house a lounge on its bottom floor

dens below the castle will be restored.
Leavitt said a newly-created parking area below the castle will be shielded from the view at the top of the hill and that up to three-quarters of the trees, which block the view of the lake once enjoyed by the original owners, will be removed.
A swimming pool will be built and the carriage roads in the area will serve as hiking and cross-country ski trails, accessible to the public.
Leavitt said the castle is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and that Bear Island Restorations will adhere to the national guidelines for restoration of historic structures in order to qualify for a 20 percent tax credit on the project.
The castle was built nearly 100 years ago by railroad magnate Benjamin Ames Kimball, president of the Boston-Montreal railroad. The Lakeport Railroad station, built in 1901, was owned by the same rail line.

which owns the castle, and an additional \$1,500 each year for the next 50 years.
The town negotiated an agreement two years ago with Leavitt and Miller for development of the castle and the 14 acres of land which surround it.
The town took title to the castle and the 265-acre Benjamin Kimball estate in the late 1980s and has been trying to find a way to preserve the oft-vandalized structure since that time.
The once magnificent structure has been exposed to the ravages of time and vandals since it was left in trust by Kimball's daughter in 1960 with the stipulation that the land be used to promote wildlife conservation. But there was never enough money in the trust to maintain the property and it has deteriorated over the years.
Caron said the plan proposed by the developers will satisfy the town's twin goals of preserving the castle and using the surrounding land as a conservation area.

BENJAMIN AMES KIMBALL

Excerpts from:
THE GRANITE MONTHLY
- June 1911 by H.C. Pearson

A series of magazine articles upon "The Leaders of New Hampshire" may well open with a brief sketch of Hon. Benjamin Ames Kimball of Concord. Railroad president and college trustee, man of affairs and man of letters, student of New Hampshire's past, maker of New Hampshire's present, builder for New Hampshire's future.

Born in that part of the town of Boscaawen which is included in the village of Penacook August 22, 1833, his father Benjamin Kimball died in the following year. At the age of sixteen the subject of this sketch with his widowed mother, Mrs. Ruth Ames Kimball, came to Concord, where he had been preceded by an older brother, John., afterwards mayor of Concord and to



Kimball's Castle, Lake Winnepesaukee, N.H. -- Ben was happy with "The Broods" as he called it. "Where in the world could one find a more superb view that lies before us?" he would often ask his guests.

POSTCARD COURTESY OF BETH LAVERTUE

day at the age of ninety. venerated by that city as its grand old man." Benjamin A. Kimball prepared in the schools of Concord and at the Hildreth school in Derry for the

Chandler Scientific Department of Dartmouth College, from which he graduated with the Class of 1854 earning, with honor, the degree of Bachelor of Science. It is not too much to say that

among all the loyal thousands of Dartmouth alumni not one has loved his alumnus more sincerely or rendered her more valuable service than has Mr. Kimball. From 1890 to 1893 a mem-

ber of the board of visitors to the Chandler Scientific School and from the latter date to the present time a trustee of the college itself, he has had a prominent and influential part in that magnificent growth and development of the "new Dartmouth," which is the wonder of the educational world

One of the first steps in this development and one in which Mr. Kimball had a large part was the merging of the Chandler School into the college proper, while in recent years as chairman of the finance committee of the board of trustees his ability and experience have been invaluable in meeting the many difficult problems, which have arisen in the rapid, material development of the college, the extension of its plant, and the multiplication of its activities.

Immediately upon the completion of his college course. Mr. Kimball made choice of his life work and has been offered by it many

Continued on Page 37

KIMBALL, from Page 30

that he chose wisely the record of his career is sufficient evidence. For almost sixty years now his name has been inseparably connected with the railroads of New Hampshire. He has climbed from the bottom round to the very top of the ladder, intimate knowledge of detail, his broad vision of project and his wise management of execution have made his influence paramount in the development of railroad transportation and its interests in the Granite state.

Mr. Kimball began as a draftsman in the mechanical department of the Concord railroad, but soon earned promotion to the superintendency of the locomotive department, where he prepared the plans for some of the famous locomotives, so well remembered by the older generation, of that time.

He had become master

mechanic of the Concord railroad when, in 1865, he resigned to enter upon an advantageous business connection. But his heart remained with the railroad life and to it he returned on a higher level, when in 1873 he was elected a director of the Manchester and North Weare railroad. When Governor Onslow Stearns died, his place as a director of the Concord railroad was filled, in January 1879 by the choice of Mr. Kimball, and that position the latter still holds through being president since 1895 as well as director of the Concord & Montreal, successor to the Concord railroad. He formulated after a bitter conflict, the consolidation of the Concord railroad with the Boston, Concord & Montreal railroad which has proved to be such an advantage to the state. He is president and director of several important subsidiary leased lines which he con-

structed to strengthen the consolidated road.

In brief Mr. Kimball is and has been for a quarter of a century New Hampshire's most prominent railroad man. In this capacity his policy has been consistent public-spirited and far-sighted. While the properties under his management have been profitable to the investors in them they have not been conducted with that end solely in view, but with an equal regard for the accommodation of the public and the development and prosperity of the state.

Mr. Kimball was one of

Continued on Page 40



Loon Cove Station- Lake Shore Railroad-1915 This scenic line followed the lakeshore from Lakeport to Alton and was formally opened on June 17, 1890. Built by the Boston & Concord Railroad (of which Mr. Kimball was president), it ran directly in front of his castle in Glendale.

PHOTO FROM B&M BULLETIN VOL. XVI, NO. 4

and the foreign companies in anger left the state, Mr. Kimball was one of the citizens who united business abilities and public spirit in the organization of domestic companies which not only met the local situation satisfactorily, but also proved good business ventures. He was one of the incorporators and a director of the Manufacturers and Merchants Mutual Fire Insurance Company.

Mention has been made of the benefits which have come to Concord through the influence of its first citizen, Mr. Kimball in railroad circles. But these are only a part of his civic services. He had a part in bringing to fruition the plans for a city library building, made possible by the generosity of William P. Fowler and Clara M. Fowler. He was active in the original construction and subsequent improvement of the city water system, and his influence was effective in securing the favorable location and spacious lots for the Federal building, and the state library structure; and in bringing about the recent enlargement of the state capital. The choice and preparation of the site for the statue of Daniel Webster in the state house yard was his duty under the administration of Governor Currier.

Across Park Street from the capitol stands a beautiful and enduring monument to Mr. Kimball's public service, in the ideal state library structure completed in 1894 under the direction extending over a period of five years, of a commission composed of Mr. Kimball, John H. Sanborn, Charles H. Burns, Irving W. Drew, and Charles J. Amidon. Many other states have reason to envy the adequate protection and accommodation which New Hampshire has given in this building to its large and valuable state collection of books and to its supreme court sessions. With another and even finer building in the group which

Continued on Page 46

40

KIMBALL, from Page 37

the first to see the modern trend towards consolidation of railroads and the advantages accruing thereby in better and more economical service. The homogeneity of New Hampshire's railroad system today stands largely to his credit. And here and there almost everywhere in the state may be seen special examples of what his influence in railroad circles has done for the state, from the splendid station and great shops at Concord, to the summer resort development of the lake region and the White Mountains section.

Mr. Kimball's railroad interests, however, are but a part of his business activities. From 1860 he has conducted the extensive Ford & Kimball manufactory of car wheels and brass and iron castings on South Main

Street, Concord. He was one of the founders, with Abe L. Cushman, electrician and inventor, of the Cushman Electric Company, another Concord industry of which he is president; and he is identified as investor and director or other official with various enterprises.

As one of Concord's wealthiest citizens it was natural that Mr. Kimball should be connected with the banking system of the city and since 1884 he has been president of the Mechanics National Bank, succeeding in that capacity Hon. Josiah Minot. He has been also, a trustee and president of the Concord Savings Bank; and a trustee of the Merrimack County Savings Bank.

In 1880, when New Hampshire enacted the "valued policy" insurance law

KIMBALL, from Page 40

constitutes Concord's civic center the name of Mr. Kimball will always be linked. Across State Street from the library stands the new home of the New Hampshire Historical Society, one of the finest buildings in the world dedicated to such use.

This building is the gift to the society of Mr. Edward

Tuck of Paris and is but one in a series of donations which have made Mr. Tuck esteemed and famous as the greatest philanthropist among New Hampshire's native sons. But, as Mr. Tuck himself is first to say, the execution of his plan, its present magnificent consummation, has largely been the work of Mr. Kimball, who has given unsparingly

of his time and efforts, has crossed the ocean several times for consultation with Mr. Tuck in the matter and in general has testified by his invaluable cooperation to his equal friendship for and interest in Mr. Tuck and the society which is the object of his beneficence. Of this New Hampshire Historical Society Mr. Kimball had been an active



Kimball's Castle overlooking the Broods in Lake Winnepesaukee. PHOTO FROM THE PUBLISHER'S COLLECTION

member for many years and 1895-97 was its president. In 1907 he was made chairman of the building committee which has represented the Society in all matters relating to its new home.

For a man of Mr. Kimball's civic prominence and public spirit participation in politics, state and national, is as natural as to be well nigh inevitable. He has been a member of the Republican party from its earliest days, has had great influence in its councils and has been offered by it many

honors only a few of which he could accept because of the pressing demands upon his time of his business and other activities.

He was a member of the state Legislature of 1870. Of three conventions to propose amendments to the constitution of the state, those held in 1876, 1889, and 1896, he had been a leading member. He was elected a member of the executive council of Governor Moody Currier (1885-1886) and did his full part toward the dis-

Continued on Page 50

KIMBALL, from Page 46

tinuation of that administration.

Such is a brief and necessarily imperfect sketch of the career of Hon. Benjamin Ames Kimball as it touches the public at various points of contact of business, politics, civil, social and educational service

The other side of the picture, the private life of our subject, is equally pleasant and honorable to dwell upon. His early educational advantages Mr. Kimball has supplemented throughout his long life by close study of both books and men, by broad and careful reading, by a wide acquaintance among worthwhile men and by extensive travel here in his own country and abroad.

Mr. and Mrs. Kimball have their spacious town house one of the finest residences; in New Hampshire in Concord at the junction of South Main street and Concord street upon grounds most artistically arranged. Mr. Kimball's factories are near by and it is but a brief walk at the passenger station, where, in the southwest corner are his offices, primal source of much of New Hampshire's history, written and unwritten, industrial and political.

Most picturesque and imposing is the Kimball summer home at The Broods, Lake Winnepesaukee. It is a castle of the Rhine country, transported to the shores of the "Smile of the Great Spirit" and placed high upon the hills, commanding a magnificent vista of lake and Mountain scenery.

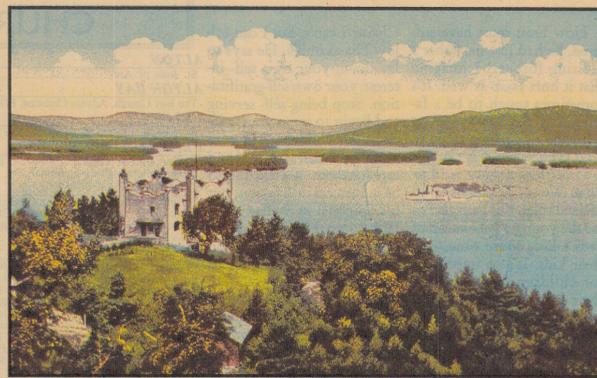
From this formal narrative of Mr. Kimball's life, record and achievements there must needs be missing that element which gives his success its finest savor to those who know him best: the element of his engaging personality: his friendliness and kindness to all who deserve it, high or low with whom he comes in contact. Affection, thus enkindled combined with admiration and esteem in the relations with Mr. Kimball of all his associates.

64

THE BUILDING OF THE CASTLE

The following is taken from remarks of George Bingham, past president of the Gilman Historical Society to the Thompson-Ames Historical Society in Gilford. Much of the information was supplied by Ray Wixson, current President of the Thompson-Ames Historical Society.

When the Lady of the Lake first began to haul passengers and freight from Alton to Center Harbor the owners almost immediately began to realize great profits since there was no competition. This state of affairs came to the attention of Ben Kimball and other directors of the Concord and Montreal R.R. So that it was not surprising to discover that ownership of the ship had quietly passed to the Concord and Montreal At that point the Boston Maine decided to join the fray and the DOVER, owned by Boston Maine went into service. But Kimball's line con-



Kimball's Castle, Glendale, N.H., overlooking Lake Winnepesaukee. The outer walls were made of stone from Locke's Hill in Gilford, but were faced with stucco shortly after the castle was built. The stucco was removed 35 years later due to water leakage. POSTCARD COURTESY OF BETH LAVERTUE

controlled the railroad and docking facilities at the Weirs and so held the upper hand until the B & M acquired facility at Meredith. From then on it was a hot race... The Lady of the Lake

fastest thing on the Lake. When she went down the ways, it signaled the beginning of an era of rivalry which lasted eighteen years. Finally, the larger and faster won out, in 1893 the Lady

of the Lake made her final trip from Wolfeboro to the Weirs. In 1894 she was towed to Glendale where she was pulled up on the beach to provide living quarters for the workmen building Kimball's Castle. When that assignment was completed, the ship was towed off Glendale and in 45 feet of water was sunk to the bottom... an ignominious finale for a grand Lady, but also the final stirring chapter of the railroad's involvement on the Lake and the incidental battles for supremacy.

It was during these years when BAK was busy expanding the Concord and Montreal holdings on land and in the water's of the Big Lake that he became familiar with the beauties of the area around Gilford. It must have occurred to him that from Lock's Hill it would be a pleasant view to keep an eye on his marine activities while at the same time con-

Continued on Page 48

48

BUILDING, from Page 64

tentedly relish the chuff-chuff of his locomotives passing through Glendale.

This might have been on his mind when on one of his trips to Europe, sailing down the Rhine River, he became enamored of a Rhine Castle. He must have concluded that Locke's Hill was just the place to build a similar Castle, for in a short time, architects were retained to duplicate the Rhine Castle and this time in Gilford.

Work was started in 1897 and took two years to finish. Nothing was spared to make the Castle not only a fitting place for a railroad tycoon also a pleasant place to spend part of each year from early Spring to Late October.

As a prerogative of the chief executive of one of New England's most flourishing railroads, a spur was built from Lakeport to Dover and the name of the Concord and Montreal was changed to Concord Montreal and Lakeshore.

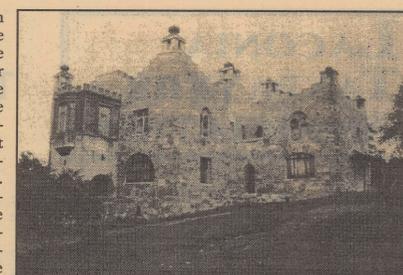
One branch just happened to run past the construction site. Although much of the stone for the building proper came from Locke's Hill and was hauled to the building by oxen, the cut

parapet stone was mined in Concord and came to the site on the new Lakeshore spur to Glendale. Interior woodwork and much of the iron work for decorative purposes came from England and Germany via boat to Boston, thence to Glendale on the Lakeshore spur. After the building was completed and living there settled into a regular summer routine, it just happened that the train schedule for trains to Concord fit in nicely with BAK's schedule. His private car would be hooked on for the trip to his office and return at civilized hours.

Ben was happy with "The Broods", as he called it, looking out over the panoramic view he frequently queried his guests on "where in the world could one find a more superb view that lies before us?"

Further as he looked across the Lake he could recall with satisfaction that back in the days when it counted he was right there with a piece of the action.

The building site was seven hundred feet above lake level and it is conceded to have one of the Lake Regions most spectacular views.



Kimball's Castle-will be restored by Bear Island Restorations of Meredith. PHOTO FROM THE PUBLISHER'S COLLECTION

The outside walls for the castle are made entirely of stone from Locke's Hill. The parapets were cut granite slabs. The interior of the house presents a German flavor with most of the woodwork being of oak and the furniture of dark cherry.

On the first floor there is a combination dining-livingroom which includes most of the main floor. There is a great brick fireplace with polished tile hearth. Wide stairways lead to the second floor where there are four bedrooms, one in each corner. There is one bath with a "Duncan Phyfe" tub. A beautiful stained glass skylight hangs above everything so that one

can have an unobstructed view from first floor right up to the skylight. A copper sewing room was added on over the front entrance way as an afterthought. The main house and servants quarters are late Romanesque and early gothic.

There is a complete kitchen with servants quarters in a separate wing. A great stone porch stretches entirely across the lake side of the building. According to my good friend and eminent local historian Gilbert Center, in 1906 Mr. Kimball changed the appearance of the famous landmark by applying a coat of white paint to the stone castle. There is no record of how well this

was received by local castle watchers of the time.

Outside there is a gardeners cottage, several car garages, a work shop and other associated buildings.

In all the property comprised about 280 acres with as much as 100 acres maintained and landscaped. Steps stretched away from the castle down the hill toward the lake. One of Mr. Kimball's pleasures was to visit the gardens and rest on his way down the hill.

So far as is known Mr. Kimball never made any effort to participate in the affairs of the Town or to become involved socially with area neighbors or acquaintances.

Benjamin Ames Kimball died in July of 1920 at the "Broods" in Gilford at the age of 86. In his lifetime he had seen great changes sweep the land. At the time of his death he had the satisfaction of knowing that he had made many a major contribution to the character and progress of the changes in New England.

Agents are making \$10 to \$25 per week, selling our Pinless Clothes Line. A Perfect Line that requires no pins and will not break. Sold only by Agents. Contact: Currier-Love Co. 200 N. Beacon St., Worcester, Mass. Sample material for 50c

Kimball's Castle Restoration Still Facing Major Hurdles

By ROGER AMSDEN
Sunday News Correspondent

GILFORD — A castle atop Lockes Hill here, built a century ago as an exact replica of one along the Rhine River in Germany, has been sacked and defaced by vandals and stripped of its armor, tapestries, and furnishings during the last 30 years.

But even though the weathered exterior stonework of Kimball's Castle is crumbling, the basic structure is still sound, and developers Don Leavitt and Rick Miller predict they will be opening its doors next summer as one of the top tourist attractions in the Lakes Region.

Miller and Leavitt, partners in Bear Island Restorations in Meredith, are taking a site plan for a \$3.2 million restoration of the historic castle before the Gilford Planning Board tomorrow night and say they hope that all of the necessary approvals for the project will be completed in time for them to start work on the castle by November.

Work on the castle will proceed throughout the winter months, inside a heated envelope surrounding the structure like a tent, they say. The heated tent will enable the stonework to be restored while an addition is constructed, adding guest rooms and a restaurant to the castle.

The castle was built by railroad magnate Benjamin Ames Kimball just before the turn of the century.

The once magnificent structure had problems within 10 years of its completion, says Miller, noting that leaks which developed in the castle's facade lead Kimball to enclose it with stucco

in an attempt to protect it from the elements. The stucco gives the castle its unusual white exterior.

Several hurdles remain before the work can begin. The front elevation of the castle is 46 feet above the ground and a proposed addition will be about the same height, requiring a special exception to the town's 35-foot height limit.

And plans for the 8,500-square-foot addition will require National Park Service approval because the castle is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Leavitt said a financial package is being put together for the project, which will require approval from the town of Gilford, which owns the castle and the 260-acre property.

The financial package includes a \$1.25 million loan from Financial Resources Inc. of Meredith and \$1.95 million from private investors being arranged through Merrimac Financing Inc. of Salem.

A new corporation, Historic Inns of New England, will be formed to manage both the castle and Red Hill Inn in Center Harbor, which also is owned by Leavitt and Miller.

Leavitt said \$200,000 of the money being raised will go toward improvements at Red Hill, a 60-acre property with an inn and a restaurant which he and Miller restored in the 1980s.

A new road from Rte. 11 to the castle and water and sewer lines will cost \$900,000. Restoration of the castle and other buildings on the castle grounds and construction of the addition will cost an estimated \$2.1 million.

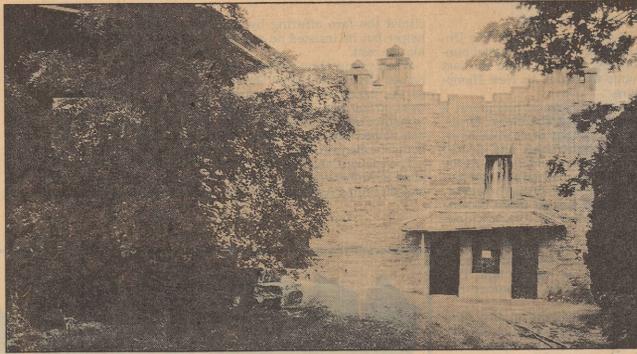
Approval also will be sought for a 20-acre subdivision.

The remaining land will be operated as a nature preserve, keeping with the original plans for the castle property.

The castle itself will be carefully restored with the exterior sandblasted and crumbling mortar and bulging walls brought back to their original contours. There will be 20 guest rooms at the site. Four will be in the castle, four will be in the addition, and the rest will be located in several other buildings on the property, including the former Lakeport railroad station, which will be moved to the site.

The addition will house a lounge on its bottom floor and part of the 120-seat restaurant on the second floor, with the third floor guest rooms connected to the original castle by a corridor.

Leavitt said the original spectacular view of Lake Winnepesaukee will be restored by removing three-quarters of the trees on the sloping hillside below the castle, helping create what he and Miller hope will become one of the most popular resort settings in the Granite State.



EXPOSED TO THE elements, the walls of Kimball's Castle in Gilford, will be restored as part of a \$3.2 million project to transform the castle into a tourist attraction. Roger Amsden Photo

First Kimball Castle Hearing Sheds Light on Restoration

By ROBERT M. COOK
Staff Writer

CENTER HARBOR — Community and business leaders interested in investing in the Kimball Castle restoration project in Gilford were introduced to their potential opportunity Thursday at the Red Hill Inn.

The first of four public meetings shed light on the plans to restore Kimball Castle in Gilford and turn it into a new restaurant and country inn as the financial portfolio of the project was discussed.

Don Leavitt and Rick Miller, owners of the Red Hill Inn, scheduled the informational meetings where they will share the details that went into the planning of the proposed \$3.2 million project. Leavitt and Miller want to buy the

By ROBERT M. COOK
Staff Writer

GILFORD — "Welcome to the neighborhood" is what Planning Board Chairperson Carolyn Scadden said to the developers of the \$3.2 million Kimball Castle restoration project Monday after the board approved the plan.

Almost four months after Don Leavitt and Rick Miller unveiled their plans to turn the former mansion of Benjamin Kimball into a luxurious restaurant and inn overlooking Lake Winnepesaukee, the developers hope to break ground in November and complete the project by next summer.

The Planning Board gave the green light to the developers to obtain a parcel of land of more than 20 acres next to the castle that will be maintained as open, undeveloped space.

The board also accepted the recommendations of John Bobula, director of the Gilford Department of Planning and Land Use, to have the developers bond the construction of the new Route 11 access road and parking lots that will provide up to 107 spaces.

Planning Board members also required the developers to make the current driveway leading up to the castle complex from Lockes Hill Road a way reserved for maintenance crews and emergency vehicles.

Land surveyor Steve Smith said the developers are in the process of purchasing a tract of land on the Bradley property near the Lockes Hill Preserve area to complete a long loop up to the castle.

Smith said Kimball Castle will offer its patrons 20 guest rooms located in the 6,500-square-foot castle, the new 8,500-square-foot addition, and



Benjamin Kimball's former mansion on Lockes Hill Road will be transformed into the restored Kimball Castle Restaurant and Inn depicted in one of Architect

Chris Williams' conceptual drawings after developers Don Leavitt and Rick Miller complete their \$3.2 million project next summer.

the buildings on the property that include the carriage house, chauffeur's quarters, and the old Lakeport Railroad Station that is currently being stored at the Laconia Municipal Airport.

The new restaurant and lounge located on the first floor of the castle and new addition will provide seating for up to 150 people, Smith said. The ice house is where the developers will build a swimming pool, hot house and install a jacuzzi, Smith said.

Smith said the developers did a parking assessment to determine how many parking spaces each component of the castle would require to meet the town's zoning requirements.

Smith said that the restaurant and lounge would require 56 shared parking

KIMBALL CASTLE, Page 8

Kimball Castle Restoration Plan To Be Reviewed

By ROGER AMSDEN
Union Leader Correspondent

GILFORD — A developer who is proposing a \$2.5 million restoration of historic Kimball Castle will present a revised site plan for the project to the Gilford Planning Board on Monday, Sept. 19.

Don Leavitt and Rick Miller of Bear Island Restorations of Meredith, have told officials they hope to be able to start work on the project this fall.

Gilford Town Administrator Dave Caron said the developers will need a variance from the town's Zoning Board of Adjustment to exceed height restrictions before the planning board will grant approval of the plan, but doubts that will be a major problem.

He said the financing package is the key to meeting the terms of the original agreement signed by the town and Bear Island and expressed confidence in the ability of the firm to deliver an acceptable plan which should enable them to start work soon.

A financing package of one-third bank financing and two-thirds private investor funding is being developed through Merrimac Corporate Financing of Salem and is awaiting approval from the state agency which oversees securities offerings.

Leavitt and Miller say the restored castle could become the premiere country inn in New England, and attract a new kind of tourist to the Lakes Region. Town officials have been working with the developers to ensure the restoration will preserve the character of the castle while remaining economically viable.

Leavitt and Miller have in historic preservation was a key element in the town agreeing to work with them on the project according to Caron.

Bear Island successfully restored all six buildings on the 60-acre Red Hill estate in Center Harbor, where they now operate a country inn and restaurant, as well as the Plymouth movie theater. The developers say they hope to complete the project, which would see a three-story, 6,000 square foot addition built next to the century-old stone castle, by June 1 of next year.

The castle itself will be carefully restored. Plans call for creation of 20 guest rooms, four of which would be in the castle, four more in the addition, and the rest in several other buildings on the property, including the former Lakeport railroad station, which will be moved onto the 14-acre site.

The addition will house a lounge on its bottom floor and a 120-seat restaurant on the second floor, with the third floor guest rooms connected to the original castle by a corridor.

As part of the project, a new \$750,000 access road will be built from Rte. 11 up Lockes Hill, where the castle is located, and terraced gardens below the castle will be restored.

The castle was built nearly 100 years ago by railroad magnate Benjamin Ames Kimball, president of the Boston-Montreal railroad. The Lakeport Railroad station, built in 1901, was owned by the same rail line.

New Kimball Castle May Open By Summer; Funds Still Sought

By ROBERT M. COOK
Staff Writer

GILFORD — Developers are shooting for a November 1 groundbreaking for a newly restored \$3.2 million Kimball Castle Restaurant and Inn that would be open by next summer.

Don Leavitt and Rick Miller explained the details of their site restoration plan they will show to the Gilford Planning Board Monday that, if approved, will turn Kimball Castle here into a restaurant and inn.

But until enough private investors make a commitment to complete two-thirds of the project's financing, the owners of the Red Hill Inn in Center Harbor will not be able to begin the project.

● KIMBALL CASTLE

□ FROM PAGE 3 □

ing spaces, the 20 guest rooms would need two shared parking spaces each, which would bring the total number of spaces to 107, five more than what is required.

By approving the plan, the board also approved the developers' plans to use a sewer tie-in at the base of the castle complex to collect all of the water and waste generated, take it down the new access road, across Route 11 into the main sewer line located on Scenic Drive.

They also approved the landscape architectural design submitted by Alan Saucier, which calls for the old Victorian gardens to be restored and for three-fourths of the trees in front of the castle removed and trimmed so that guests and patrons will enjoy spectacular views of Lake Winnepesaukee and the White Mountains.

"The developing team has stayed close to the planning being done on this. All of the engineering and all of the landscaping design aspects are well within the department's review criteria. A great deal of sensitivity was shown concerning the native species and what should normally occur," said Bobula.

He added that the planning process for the town and the Bear Island Restoration Foundation involved a great deal of "give and take" and led to get to this stage.

A majority of the 30 residents who attended Monday's hearing at Gilford Town Hall told the board they were in favor of the project as long as the developers posted bonds to ensure that the access road from Route 11 and parking areas would be constructed in conjunction with the castle's renovation work.

Smith said the developers must now go before the Zoning Board of Adjustment to obtain a special exception to allow the 46-foot height of both the castle and addition that exceeds the town's zoning ordinance of 35 feet.

Leavitt said that approval is very important because without it the National Park Service may not approve the project if it does not preserve the historical appearance of the landmark he said was the Lakes Region's "Mount Vernon."

The NPS will also give the developers a 20 percent tax credit for the restoration work they will do at the site, which is another key component of the project.

GILFORD, Page 10

Gilford Zoning Board to Take Up Kimball Castle Restoration Plan

By ROBERT M. COOK
Staff Writer

GILFORD — The Kimball Castle restoration project's developers have the blessing of the selectmen, Planning Board and future adjusters, but the Zoning Board of Adjustment must approve it before they can break ground.

The ZBA must grant the project a special exception to allow its 46-foot high castle and new addition to exceed the town's current zoning ordinance calls for buildings not to exceed 35 feet.

Developers Donald Leavitt and Rick Miller received approval of their revised site plan to locate a 120-seat restaurant, 30-seat lounge and 20 guest rooms around the castle grounds last week.

Gilford Department of Planning and Land Use Director John Bobula does not believe the developers

going before the ZBA this evening will encounter a mere technicality, but a lively discussion.

Bobula agrees with Leavitt's assessment that the variance represents an important step to piecing together the complicated puzzle to make this project a reality.

He said he does not know what the ZBA's feelings are on the issue, but he would be a shame if the board decided not to approve the project because of the proposed height of the addition, a new structure.

Bobula said that because the castle is an existing structure, its height of 46 feet is acceptable, but the National Register of Historic Places will not accept the plan if the addition does not conform to the same height.

Bobula said that from an architectural standpoint, the developers would have a very difficult time

making the project's design work structurally and aesthetically without the variance.

"Like anything you send to a jury, you just don't know what's going to happen," said Bobula of tonight's Zoning Board of Adjustment hearing.

Before the developers can break ground on the project in November to open the facility to the public, the NPS will not approve it and the work would not be able to go forward.

The hearing to decide whether the proposed project that Leavitt called the Lakes Region's "Mount Vernon" will move ahead to the next level will take place at 7 p.m. in Gilford Town Hall.

Currently, the developers have borrowed a \$1.25 million loan from the Meredith-based firm of Financial Resources Inc. and are in the process of collecting \$1.95 million from private investors through the Merrimac Financing Corporation in Salem, Leavitt said.

● GILFORD

□ FROM PAGE 3 □

John Otte, who works out of Architect Chris Williams office in Meredith, told The Citizen at a press conference that Benjamin Kimball's former mansion off of Lockes Hill Road that overlooks Lake Winnepesaukee and the White Mountains is on the NPS register of historic places.

As such, it needs to maintain its historical appearance so that the

new 8,500-square foot addition complements the existing 6,500-square foot castle that will be joined together by a two-story bridge and house both the restaurant, lounge and eight luxurious guest rooms.

Otte said that if the ZBA does not grant the special exception to allow the height of the castle and proposed addition to stand, the NPS will not approve it and the work would not be able to go forward.

The hearing to decide whether the proposed project that Leavitt called the Lakes Region's "Mount Vernon" will move ahead to the next level will take place at 7 p.m. in Gilford Town Hall.

Currently, the developers have borrowed a \$1.25 million loan from the Meredith-based firm of Financial Resources Inc. and are in the process of collecting \$1.95 million from private investors through the Merrimac Financing Corporation in Salem, Leavitt said.

If the ZBA and NPS both sign off on the project, the developers will have to complete collection of the needed funds to pay for the total construction and renovation costs as well as improvements for the Red Hill Inn, Leavitt explained.

Once that step is completed, the town of Gilford will receive \$100,000 in cash at the closing for the castle property and its buildings and the Kimball Castle Committee will receive \$75,000 over the next 50 years to help preserve the 260 acres of the Lockes Hill Trails, according to Leavitt.

● CASTLE

□ FROM PAGE 3 □

Misty Harbor Resort Hotel in Gilford from noon to 3:30 p.m., according to Leavitt and Miller.

Kevin Boyle, president of Merrimac Corporate Securities in Salem, will also attend each meeting to address the private investor portion of the \$3.2 million project he is raising for the developers.

"After two years of planning, the restoration of Kimball's Castle in Gilford is about to begin. This magnificent building, which is listed on

the National Register of Historic Places, is an important part of the history of the Lakes Region, and we will soon return it to prominence as a luxury inn and restaurant," an Oct. 1 letter from Miller and Leavitt reads.

A spokesperson at the Red Hill Inn said that the meetings are not solely intended to attract private investors, information will also be available for any member of the public who wants to invest in the project.

To date, Leavitt and Miller have obtained all the necessary approvals from the Town of Gilford to build a new 120-seat restaurant, 30-seat lounge and provide 20 luxurious guest rooms furnished with antique and modern decor.

Leavitt said some of the 20 guest rooms will be located inside the Old Lakeport Railroad Station, which

will be moved to the site eventually. They currently have the station stored at the Laconia Municipal Airport.

Leavitt said the developers have borrowed \$1.25 million from a Meredith-based lender and are in the process of raising the remaining \$1.95 million from private investors.

According to the terms of the agreement, Leavitt said the developers will give the Town of Gilford \$100,000 in cash for the castle, surrounding buildings and grounds at the closing of the sale.

The developers will also provide the Kimball Castle Committee a total of \$75,000 over a 50-year period to maintain the 260-acre Lockes Hill Preserve, which contains a network of hiking trails that will still be open to the public, according to Leavitt.

The project's financial portfolio also includes a 20-percent tax credit for any restoration work or construction of the new 8,500-square foot addition from the National Parks Service, according to Leavitt. Architect Chris Williams of Meredith said his design for the project's addition had to conform to the existing historical appearance of Benjamin Kimball's former mansion because the property is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Miller said that developers hope to break ground on the project in November so they can open the new country inn and restaurant to the public by June.

Miller said that the developers do not need to have all of the money from private investors in place to start work on the project, but he would not say how much of the \$1.95 million is required to allow them to construct a new access road from Route 11, the castle's four new parking areas, and to begin the restoration work.

Boyle told The Citizen that he is confident this unique restoration project will attract enough private investment because the economy is on the mend and the tourist industry has shown marked gains in recent years.

Boyle added that Miller and Leavitt also have a proven track record, citing the partners' turning the formerly vacant Red Hill Inn property purchased in 1986 into a profitable business.

Kimball Castle Project Gets Variance

By ROBERT M. COOK
Staff Writer

GILFORD — The Kimball Castle restoration project received a much needed height variance from the Zoning Board of Adjustment after developers proved their case of hardship and allied the fire department's concerns.

The ZBA voted unanimously Tuesday to grant the height vari-

ance that will allow the architectural design by Chris Williams of the plan, the board is to stay intact and the developers to gain approvals from the National Park Service to qualify for a 20 percent tax credit to help pay for the restoration costs.

The \$3.2 million project calls for developers to build a new 8,500-square-foot addition 46 feet high that will be built alongside Benjamin Kimball's former castle estate on Lockes Hill Road that overlooks Lake Winnepesaukee and the White Mountains.

With the ZBA approval, the project will be able to gain a building permit from the town and has the support of the selectmen, planning board, and fire department.

Don Leavitt and Rick Miller, owners of the Red Hill Inn in Center Harbor, said they will turn Kimball Castle into an inn with a 120-seat restaurant and 30-seat lounge that would provide guests with 20 guest rooms next summer.

Williams said the National Park Service would not sign off on the project and halt further development if the board voted not to exceed the town's 35-foot height ordinance for new structures.

He explained that the Park Service wanted the new building to complement the historical appearance of Benjamin Kimball's former mansion because the property is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Williams said that developers hope to break ground on the project in November so they can open the new country inn and restaurant to the public by June.

Miller said that the developers do not need to have all of the money from private investors in place to start work on the project, but he would not say how much of the \$1.95 million is required to allow them to construct a new access road from Route 11, the castle's four new parking areas, and to begin the restoration work.

Boyle told The Citizen that he is confident this unique restoration project will attract enough private investment because the economy is on the mend and the tourist industry has shown marked gains in recent years.

Boyle added that Miller and Leavitt also have a proven track record, citing the partners' turning the formerly vacant Red Hill Inn property purchased in 1986 into a profitable business.

He said the approval shows that if developers do their homework and contact all the agencies involved in the process, it usually pays off.

When asked how much more money they need to raise from private investors to complete the financial package needed to pay for the project, Miller said he could not say how much of the \$1.95 million is in his pocket.

Miller said that only a portion of that sum is needed to actually get construction of the access road from Route 11, parking lots, the addition and castle restoration underway, but he could not say how much is required or when they might have that issue settled.

The developers have currently borrowed \$1.25 million from the Meredith-based Financial Resources Corp. and are raising \$1.95 million from private investors through the Merrimac Financing Corporation in Salem, Leavitt said.

If the ZBA and NPS both sign off on the project, the developers will have to complete collection of the needed funds to pay for the total construction and renovation costs as well as improvements for the Red Hill Inn, Leavitt explained.

Once that step is completed, the town of Gilford will receive \$100,000 in cash at the closing for the castle property and its buildings and the Kimball Castle Committee will receive \$75,000 over the next 50 years to help preserve the 260 acres of the Lockes Hill Trails, according to Leavitt.

Williams said the National Park Service would not sign off on the project and halt further development if the board voted not to exceed the town's 35-foot height ordinance for new structures.

He explained that the Park Service wanted the new building to complement the historical appearance of Benjamin Kimball's former mansion because the property is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Williams said that developers hope to break ground on the project in November so they can open the new country inn and restaurant to the public by June.

Miller said that the developers do not need to have all of the money from private investors in place to start work on the project, but he would not say how much of the \$1.95 million is required to allow them to construct a new access road from Route 11, the castle's four new parking areas, and to begin the restoration work.

Boyle told The Citizen that he is confident this unique restoration project will attract enough private investment because the economy is on the mend and the tourist industry has shown marked gains in recent years.

Boyle added that Miller and Leavitt also have a proven track record, citing the partners' turning the formerly vacant Red Hill Inn property purchased in 1986 into a profitable business.

LOCAL

The Citizen, Laconia, N.H. THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20, 1994 Page 9

Banker: Financing Kimball Castle Project No Problem

By ROBERT M. COOK
Staff Writer

GILFORD The investment banker handling the financing of the \$3.2 million Kimball Castle restoration project said the developers can sell up to \$1.95 million in securities to private investors in a matter of days.

Leavitt said that approval is very important because without it the National Park Service may not approve the project if it does not preserve the historical appearance of the landmark he said was the Lakes Region's "Mount Vernon."

The NPS will also give the developers a 20 percent tax credit for the restoration work they will do at the site, which is another key component of the project.

Leavitt said that approval is very important because without it the National Park Service may not approve the project if it does not preserve the historical appearance of the landmark he said was the Lakes Region's "Mount Vernon."

Leavitt said that approval is very important because without it the National Park Service may not approve the project if it does not preserve the historical appearance of the landmark he said was the Lakes Region's "Mount Vernon."

The NPS will also give the developers a 20 percent tax credit for the restoration work they will do at the site, which is another key component of the project.

Leavitt said that approval is very important because without it the National Park Service may not approve the project if it does not preserve the historical appearance of the landmark he said was the Lakes Region's "Mount Vernon."

The Citizen, Laconia, NH, May 24, 1995

Financing Progresses for Rebuilding Castle

Gilford Board Grants Sale Extension Until September

By ED PUFFER
Staff Writer

GILFORD — Kimball Castle has sat vacant for years. The castle, which once towered over Lake Winnepesaukee, is now so overgrown with vegetation that little of it can be seen from anywhere on the lake.

It will continue to wait, but perhaps not for long, as the potential buyers of the property have made progress with their financing plans. The Gilford Board of Selectmen, which would finalize the sale of the town property, has given Historic Inns of New England an extension to the end of September to obtain fi-

CASTLE
FROM PAGE 3

which includes a financing plan and a number of limited partnership units. Once those pieces come together, the selectmen can sell the property, which is now held in a trust administered by the town.

"We're very positive on assisting the developers to any extent. It doesn't occur every day that you get to work on a real castle," said Gilford Planning Director John Bobula. "I suppose this is an exercise in municipal patience and we're still

pretty confident that it will have a positive outcome."

Inkeeper Don Leavitt, a general partner in the project with Rick Miller, said town officials have been extremely helpful in making the project proposals a reality.

"They know the great benefit this project will be, not only for the town but for the entire region," Leavitt said.

Leavitt said last fall, plans were nearly in place to go forward with marketing the limited partnership units. However, the federal Small Business Administration program that was to guarantee the loan was eliminated in December, leaving

developers with no safety net for their loan. That loan arrangement fell through, but over the next several months, the developers got connected with the Money Store and with a different Small Business Administration program. The limited partnership plans had been put on hold, but marketing is now going forward as the financing package is nearly sealed.

"Now we're back out there. We have a lot of good prospects," Leavitt said. "We're very optimistic that things look great."

Leavitt said the state has also been helpful in quickly reviewing

and approving a revised set of offering documents, which explains the project, its benefits and risks, to potential investors. Leavitt said the experience of Historic Inns of New England is an additional plus.

"Red Hill Inn had a great year in 1994, so it's very gratifying to point to the success we have here," Leavitt said.

"It really looks like they're shooting for a four-star establishment in every way," Bobula said. "And it seems to me that this particular developer has the capacity to accomplish it."

Historic Inns of New England has expressed interest in renovating and expanding the site and the group has received all the necessary planning board approvals.

The last key is the financing, which includes a financing plan and a number of limited partnership units.

once known. The Gilford Planning Board on Monday gave the pair the green light to proceed with their plans. In addition, the board is mulling giving Leavitt and Miller a letter endorsing the project to help them secure the \$2.5 million financing necessary to carry out the project. For more on the castle, see Page 3. (Citizen Photo/Ben Garver)

CASTLE, Page 10

THE WEIRS TIMES, Thursday, January 11, 1996

5



Benjamin A. Kimball

by Del Brandt
Contributing Writer

The "Big Four" of American railroad history, Leland Stanford, Collis P. Huntington, Charles Crocker and Mark Hopkins, could easily have been joined by another railroad pioneer, Benjamin A. Kimball, New England tycoon who headed the Boston, Concord and Montreal Railroad and the small, but important, Lake Shore Railroad.

Kimball founded the latter out of his love for the Lakes Region which led to his building of "Kimball's Castle," a well-known local landmark.

While the so-called "Big Four" of Stanford, Crocker, Huntington, and Hopkins were instrumental in bringing the Pacific Coast into the trans continental rail network with the historic link-up with the Union Pacific Railroad at Promontory Point, Utah, in 1869, Kimball was not far behind with his contribution here in the East. In doing so, Kimball brought the "iron horse" to the Lakes Region.

As too often happens, progress occurs when some financier decides to use his resources on an improvement for his own personal convenience. As president of the Boston, Concord and Montreal Line, he had many

opportunities to pass through the Lakes Region of New Hampshire and he saw first hand its manifold possibilities as a recreation and tourist center.

Translated, that meant more customers for his Railroad.

Dating back to the time he was "knee-high to a grasshopper," Benjamin Ames Kimball had the love of railroads in his system. As a result, when he reached manhood, Kimball made it his business to learn more about the burgeoning industry that was sweeping the nation. He was only 15 when he took his first job in a machine shop in a railroad maintenance yard. Then it was on to Dartmouth College for an interlude of Liberal Arts study to be followed in 1854 by a return to the railroads as a draftsman and designer for the Concord Railroad. To bolster his financial portfolio, Kimball went into banking, but in 1879, he renewed his railroad affiliation as a director for the company which oddly enough had been his first employer. In an official position, he found it possible to mastermind the construction and map the future of his company, the Boston, Concord and Montreal Railroad, one of the major lines in the eastern network. Adding to his considerable holdings, Kimball went ahead with the construction of the Lake Shore Railroad as a branch of the larger line.

It was at this point in time that Kimball started scouting around for an ideal location to build a summer home. He found it on a 400-acre spread atop Locke's Hill in Gilford which commanded a sweeping view of Lake Winnepesaukee.

The railroad tycoon began having visions of a castle he had seen while cruising down the Rhine River during an European tour and decided to build a similar one on his "piece of heaven" overlooking the "Broads."

Construction of the large stone building began in 1879 and was completed in 1899. It is said that Kimball super-



Kimball's Castle, Belknap Point, Gilford, New Hampshire. "Ben was happy with 'the Broads', as he called it." PHOTO FROM THE PUBLISHERS COLLECTION

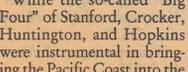
occupied by the Kimball family every year until 1960

when Kimball's daughter, Charlotte, died.

Since her death, the property has been in a period of transition, finally falling into the hands of the town of Gilford. The castle, still in need of extensive renovation, is planned to eventually reopen as an inn and restaurant. And the railroad Kimball built below, is but a memory.



occupied by the Kimball family every year until 1960



Charles A. Busiel

by Del Brandt
Contributing Writer

Charles A. Busiel is the only Laconian ever to make it to the New Hampshire Governor's chair and was that's only part of the story. Aside from his political successes, Busiel, from the family which built the Busiel Mill, made his mark as a railroad tycoon second only perhaps, to Benjamin A. Kimball in bringing rail transportation to the region.

When you pass the Laconia railroad station in Veterans' Square and admire its unique architecture, credit Charles Busiel with being one of the motivating forces behind its construction.

Busiel was serving as a managing director of Kimball's Concord and Montreal Railroad when he was seized with the determination to bring to his hometown one of the finest termi-

nals along the entire line. He had a vision of the station becoming the centerpiece of a dignified public square as a lasting memorial to war veterans. The architect, Bradford Gilbert, came up with a design for a building in the Romanesque Revival tradition.

Constructed of pink granite combined with a dark red freestone trim, the station continues to serve the community well even after the suspension of passenger service in the 1960's. The station was built in 1892, eleven years before the equally impressive Gale Public Library went up across the street.

Another reminder of the Busiel legacy is the brick structure opposite the Belknap Mill in downtown Laconia. It is the Busiel Mill, founded by Charles' father,

but not before Lake Shore Park, an important development, and several inns, were built. Railroad executives and their families often frequented these places and several built expensive cottages in the park during the days when railroad trains were "the thing" in getting around the Lakes Region. Only the "big lake" had a greater allure.

Meanwhile in the capital

city of Concord, the kingmakers were beginning to take notice of the Laconia "mover and shaker" named Charles Busiel. When he was elected mayor, his politics had not been clearly defined as he had been, more or less, viewed as an independent with no party label deeply attached to him. He was usually too busy to attend political party meetings. He was, however, elected as a Republican to a two-year term as New Hampshire governor from 1895 to 1897 with strong support from railroad and banking circles.

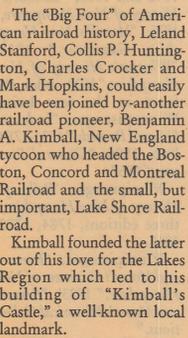
Busiel's business background served him in good stead in the governor's chair as he succeeded in improving the state's financial posture which was wavering when he took office. He accepted the task as another challenge and finished his term with high marks.

Completed at a cost of \$160,000, Busiel went forward on the project with the blessing of Benjamin Kimball, who already was seeing a "Kimball's Castle" in his future.

The Lake Shore Railroad had a comparatively short life, closing down in 1934,

THE WEIRS TIMES, Thursday, February 29, 1996

5



Charles A. Busiel

by Del Brandt
Contributing Writer

Completed at a cost of \$160,000, Busiel went forward on the project with the blessing of Benjamin Kimball, who already was seeing a "Kimball's Castle" in his future.

The Lake Shore Railroad had a comparatively short life, closing down in 1934,

but not before Lake Shore Park, an important development, and several inns, were built. Railroad executives and their families often frequented these places and several built expensive cottages in the park during the days when railroad trains were "the thing" in getting around the Lakes Region. Only the "big lake" had a greater allure.

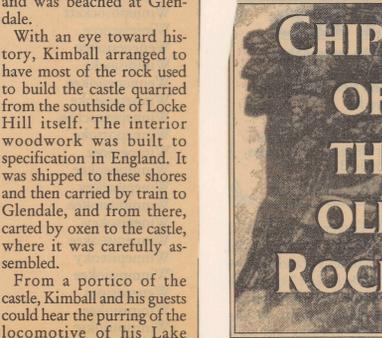
Meanwhile in the capital

city of Concord, the kingmakers were beginning to take notice of the Laconia "mover and shaker" named Charles Busiel. When he was elected mayor, his politics had not been clearly defined as he had been, more or less, viewed as an independent with no party label deeply attached to him. He was usually too busy to attend political party meetings. He was, however, elected as a Republican to a two-year term as New Hampshire governor from 1895 to 1897 with strong support from railroad and banking circles.

Busiel's business background served him in good stead in the governor's chair as he succeeded in improving the state's financial posture which was wavering when he took office. He accepted the task as another challenge and finished his term with high marks.

Completed at a cost of \$160,000, Busiel went forward on the project with the blessing of Benjamin Kimball, who already was seeing a "Kimball's Castle" in his future.

The Lake Shore Railroad had a comparatively short life, closing down in 1934,



RESIDENCE OF THE HON. CHARLES A. BUSIEL. PHOTO FROM "THE ILLUSTRATED LAONIAN" - 1899

Completed at a cost of \$160,000, Busiel went forward on the project with the blessing of Benjamin Kimball, who already was seeing a "Kimball's Castle" in his future.

The Lake Shore Railroad had a comparatively short life, closing down in 1934,

but not before Lake Shore Park, an important development, and several inns, were built. Railroad executives and their families often frequented these places and several built expensive cottages in the park during the days when railroad trains were "the thing" in getting around the Lakes Region. Only the "big lake" had a greater allure.

Meanwhile in the capital

city of Concord, the kingmakers were beginning to take notice of the Laconia "mover and shaker" named Charles Busiel. When he was elected mayor, his politics had not been clearly defined as he had been, more or less, viewed as an independent with no party label deeply attached to him. He was usually too busy to attend political party meetings. He was, however, elected as a Republican to a two-year term as New Hampshire governor from 1895 to 1897 with strong support from railroad and banking circles.

Busiel's business background served him in good stead in the governor's chair as he succeeded in improving the state's financial posture which was wavering when he took office. He accepted the task as another challenge and finished his term with high marks.

Completed at a cost of \$160,000, Busiel went forward on the project with the blessing of Benjamin Kimball, who already was seeing a "Kimball's Castle" in his future.

The Lake Shore Railroad had a comparatively short life, closing down in 1934,

but not before Lake Shore Park, an important development, and several inns, were built. Railroad executives and their families often frequented these places and several built expensive cottages in the park during the days when railroad trains were "the thing" in getting around the Lakes Region. Only the "big lake" had a greater allure.

Meanwhile in the capital

city of Concord, the kingmakers were beginning to take notice of the Laconia "mover and shaker" named Charles Busiel. When he was elected mayor, his politics had not been clearly defined as he had been, more or less, viewed as an independent with no party label deeply attached to him. He was usually too busy to attend political party meetings. He was, however, elected as a Republican to a two-year term as New Hampshire governor from 1895 to 1897 with strong support from railroad and banking circles.

Busiel's business background served him in good stead in the governor's chair as he succeeded in improving the state's financial posture which was wavering when he took office. He accepted the task as another challenge and finished his term with high marks.

Castle Plan Moves Forward



Don Leavitt, left, and Rick Miller go over plans to restore Kimball Castle in Gilford to the grandeur it once knew. The Gilford Planning Board on Monday gave the pair the green light to proceed with their plans. In addition, the board is mulling giving Leavitt and Miller a letter endorsing the project to help them secure the \$2.5 million financing necessary to carry out the project. For more on the castle, see Page 3. (Citizen Photo/Ben Garver)

Developers Ask Extension Of Castle Option

By ROBERT M. COOK
Staff Writer

GILFORD — The developers who want to turn Kimball Castle into a country inn will ask the Board of Selectmen Wednesday to extend their option to buy the property until March 31.

Caron said the request from Don Leavitt and Rick Miller, owners of the Red Hill Inn in Center Harbor, comes just days after their plan to obtain \$2.1 million from private investors was approved by the state Securities and Insurance Division of the Attorney General's Office.

Leavitt and Miller have already borrowed more than \$1 million of the \$3 million-plus they need for the project, which they hope to complete by the fall of 1995. They plan to obtain the rest of the funding they need to complete the deal

CASTLE, Page 8

CASTLE
FROM PAGE 3

made with the town of Gilford from private investors.

Legally, however, the developers could not sell shares of the project to private investors until after they acquired the state approval, said Miller.

"The board will look favorably on the request," Caron said of the option, adding "These two gentlemen have invested a lot of money in the design and legal expenses of this project."

He said that Leavitt and Miller, who purchased the Red Hill Inn property in 1985 and successfully renovated it and turned it into a profitable business, want their agreement with the town extended until March 31.

Caron said that on that date, the developers would pay Gilford \$100,000 in cash for the buildings erected by Benjamin Kimball at the turn of the century and the 14-acre parcel they sit upon plus \$75,000 over the next 50 years to maintain the remaining 246 acres of the Lockes Hill Nature Preserve.

Miller said that now that the developers have the state approval needed to make the project go, "we are starting to collect our investor money."

Miller said that no work is taking place at the property because the developers have been unable to

close on the property, but he is confident that once they close in March, a late summer or early fall opening will follow.

"There is no chance that this won't go," said Miller. "There continues to be a great deal of interest in the project and a great number of people who are interested in being investors in the project."

Leavitt and Miller have obtained all the needed approvals for their plan from the Gilford Planning Board, Zoning Board of Adjustment and the selectmen.

What they hope to create is a luxurious country inn that will offer patrons from far and wide spectacular views of Lake Winnepesaukee and the White Mountains from the 20 guest rooms they will build inside the old castle walls and throughout the houses and buildings located near it.

Their plan includes a 6,000-square-foot addition that will be constructed next to the existing castle its former owner modeled after the great castles he saw in Europe on the Rhine River.

The castle will have a 120-seat restaurant, a 30-seat lounge located in the basement and up to eight guest rooms located in the rest of the castle furnished with antiques and complete with modern day comforts of cable television and Jacuzzis.

The castle will have a 120-seat restaurant, a 30-seat lounge located in the basement and up to eight guest rooms located in the rest of the castle furnished with antiques and complete with modern day comforts of cable television and Jacuzzis.

The castle will have a 120-seat restaurant, a 30-seat lounge located in the basement and up to eight guest rooms located in the rest of the castle furnished with antiques and complete with modern day comforts of cable television and Jacuzzis.

The castle will have a 120-seat restaurant, a 30-seat lounge located in the basement and up to eight guest rooms located in the rest of the castle furnished with antiques and complete with modern day comforts of cable television and Jacuzzis.

The castle will have a 120-seat restaurant, a 30-seat lounge located in the basement and up to eight guest rooms located in the rest of the castle furnished with antiques and complete with modern day comforts of cable television and Jacuzzis.

The castle will have a 120-seat restaurant, a 30-seat lounge located in the basement and up to eight guest rooms located in the rest of the castle furnished with antiques and complete with modern day comforts of cable television and Jacuzzis.

VOL. 70 NO. 200 LACONIA, N.H.

"VOICE OF CENTRAL N.H." Friday 5-23-96

Castle Project Gets Key Boost

\$3M Plan Will Rebuild Kimball Castle

By FRED SEELIG
Staff Writer

GILFORD — After 30 years of vandalism, neglect and failures to restore it, the Kimball Castle is finally going to be fixed up — and that's no fairy tale.

Owners of the Red Hill Inn of Center Harbor announced this morning that they have a \$3 million deal to rebuild the former private residence which is on the National Register of Historic Places.

The castle, together with the carriage house, a caretaker's house, and an outright expansion of 8,000 square feet, will have 20 guest bedrooms and a dining capacity of 120, said Don Leavitt, from the Red Hill Inn.

Each room will have a fireplace and whirlpool tub.

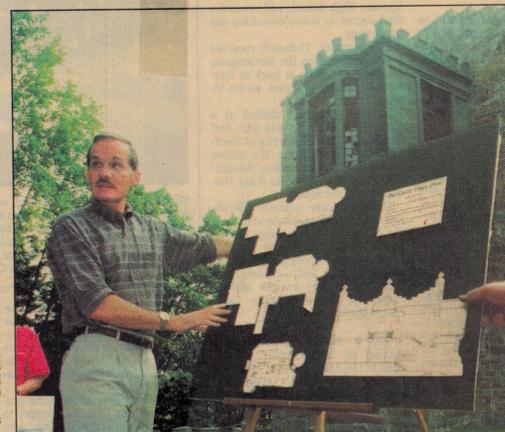
Restoration will begin in October with masonry repairs to the granite structure. They'll work throughout the winter, and hope to open sometime next summer, said Leavitt.

But he stressed that the unusual and extensive work means they won't try to adhere to stringent schedules.

He said the hardest part of the restoration was actually the financing. Some local private investments were made, but financing also had to be secured through the American Money Network of Atlanta, Ga., and through the Merrimac Corporate Securities, Inc., of Londonderry.

"Trying to secure funding for a

CASTLE, Page 10



Developer Dan Leavitt shows the floor plan for the restoration of the Kimball Castle in Gilford during a press conference Friday morning. The \$3 million project will convert the castle from its current condition into a bed and breakfast with an improved view of Lake Winnepesaukee that is slated to be open by next summer. (Citizen Photo/Lee K. Marriner)

CASTLE
FROM PAGE 1

building like this isn't as easy as going into your local bank," said Leavitt, although he admitted he tried.

Leavitt did not give a breakdown on the financing.

The castle, built by railroad baron Benjamin Kimball between 1898 and 1900, has been unused since 1960 when its last resident, Charlotte Kimball, died.

Through the years, all the antique furniture, some specially made for the castle in Europe, has been destroyed or stolen. And the 6,000-square-foot structure itself has also suffered vandalism and neglect.

The kitchen has virtually the only furnishings left — a built-in icebox, a woodstove, a dry sink. The room will be made into the office, and those items retained, said Leavitt.

The castle used to have a "fantastic view" of Winnepesaukee, said Leavitt — and it will again, once most of the trees that have grown up over the years are removed from the hillside below the castle.

In the same area, there used to be flower gardens with walkways, which will also be restored.

Leavitt said that sitting in what will be the dining room, on Independence Day, people will be able to watch the fireworks from Wolfeboro, Weirs Beach, Center Harbor, Meredith, and perhaps even Opeshee Park.

"I think this is going to put Gilford on the map as a historic site," said Selectman Pat LaBonte. He said restoring the castle was one of his pet tasks since joining the board in 1988.

And Leavitt also said, "People

come to New Hampshire not for glitzy shopping, but our slow pace of life, our small-town history."

Despite the more than doubling in size, and the modern updates (like electric lights, instead of the original gas), Leavitt insists it will be an authentic restoration.

"The castle itself gets very little change... When we're done, Benjamin Kimball himself can walk into this side of the castle (opposite the forthcoming addition) and it will look like it did the day he moved in."

The other option, he said, was to chain it off and leave it in ruins.

No one knows who the architect was, said Leavitt. He described the interior as "tasteful" and "simple" in design, with lots of mahogany woodwork — made in England, taken apart and numbered, shipped to Boston, railroaded to the bottom of the hill, brought to the castle by oxen, and reassembled.

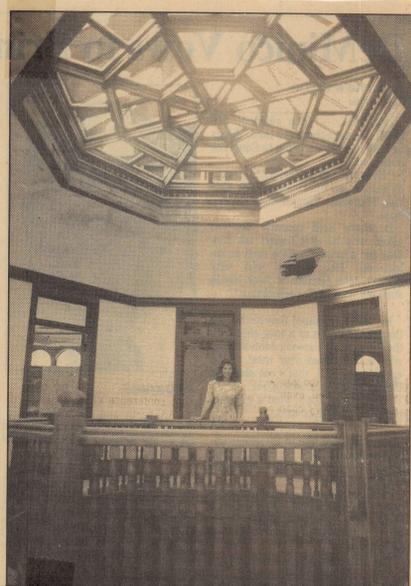
On the second floor of the castle, the bedrooms surround an octagonal hallway — which opens up in the middle, as an octagonal, enclosed balcony to the first floor. And looking straight up, there's an octagonal, peaked, stained-glass skylight.

There's also some 200 acres of woods that will be preserved with hiking trails up Locke's Hill.

And the public will be able to park at the inn's lot and use the trails, said Leavitt, who admitted he hopes they will stop at the inn for tea after their hike.

But Leavitt warned that people should stay away for now until they are done because the stonework is unstable and dangerous.

Whether it's "12 noon or 12 midnight," said Leavitt, or whether the person is "18 or 80, any trespasser will be arrested."



Sandra McGonagle of the Kimball Wildlife Forest preservation group stands under an octagonal skylight inside the Kimball Castle in Gilford Friday morning before the start of a press conference announcing the restoration of the castle into a bed and breakfast.

(Citizen Photo/Lee K. Marriner)

Gilford Castle To Get \$3 Million Coat of Armor

By ROGER AMSDEN
Union Leader Correspondent

GILFORD — A castle atop Lockes Hill — built a century ago as an exact replica of one along the Rhine River in Germany — will receive a \$3 million facelift.

Developers Don Leavitt and Rick Miller are hoping that it will be opening the castle's doors next summer as a top tourist attraction in the Lakes Region.

Miller and Leavitt, partners in Bear Island Restorations in Meredith, announced yesterday they have secured the \$3 million financing needed to undertake the project, which will see the original stonework restored and the construction of an 8,500-square-foot addition to the castle, which was built by railroad magnate Benjamin Ames Kimball just before the turn of the century.

The addition will be slightly larger than the 6,000-square-foot castle and will provide space for additional guest rooms, a 120-seat dining room and a kitchen.

The castle had been sacked and defaced by vandals and stripped of its armor, tapestries, and furnishings in the last 30 years.

But even though the weathered exterior stonework of Kimball's Castle is crumbling, the basic structure is still sound.

Once the project is completed, the castle, together with the caretaker's house and the former Lakeport railroad station, will provide the new resort with 20 guest rooms, all with fireplaces and jacuzzis.

Leavitt said a financial package involves some local investments and financing from the American Money

Network of Atlanta, Ga., and Merrimac Corp. Securities Inc. of Londonderry.

A new corporation, Historic Inns of New England, has been formed to manage the castle and Red Hill Inn in Center Harbor, also owned by Leavitt and Miller.

A new road from Route 11 to the castle will be constructed and water and sewer lines will be installed as part of the project.

The castle property itself will encompass 20 acres and is adjacent to a 200-plus acre nature preserve owned by the town of Gilford.

Leavitt said the spectacular views of Lake Winnepesaukee will be restored by removing three-quarters of the trees on the sloping hillside below the castle, helping create what he and Miller hope will become one of the most popular resort settings in the Granite State.

KIMBALL'S CASTLE PROJECT GETS FINANCING PACKAGE

... could become the premiere country inn in New England

By Roger Amsden
News Correspondent

GILFORD — A castle atop Lockes Hill here, built a century ago as an exact replica of one along the Rhine River in Germany, has been sacked and defaced by vandals and stripped of its armor, tapestries, and furnishings over the last 30 years.

But even though the weathered exterior stonework of Kimball's Castle is crumbling, the basic structure is still sound, and developers Don Leavitt and Rick Miller are hoping that it will be opening its doors next summer as one of the top tourist attractions in the Lakes Region.

Miller and Leavitt, partners in Bear Island Restorations in Meredith, have se-

cured the \$3 million in financing needed to undertake the project, which will see the original stonework restored and the construction of an 8,500 square foot addition to the castle, which was built by railroad magnate Benjamin Ames Kimball just before the turn of the century.

The addition will be slightly larger than the 6,000 square foot castle and will provide space for additional guestrooms, a 120-seat dining room and a kitchen.

The castle, together with the caretaker's house and the former Lakeport railroad station, which was also built by Kimball, will provide the new resort with 20 guestrooms, all of which will have fireplaces and a jacuzzi.

Leavitt said a financial package involves some local investments and financing from the American Money Network of Atlanta, Ga., and Merrimac Corporate Securities Inc., of Londonderry.

A new corporation, Historic Inns of New England, has been formed to manage the castle and Red Hill Inn in Center Harbor, which is also owned by Leavitt and Miller.

A new road from Rte. 11 to the castle will be constructed and water and sewer lines will be installed as part of the project.

The castle property itself will encompass 20 acres and is adjacent to a 200 plus acre nature preserve owned by the town of Gilford.

Leavitt said the spectacular views of Lake Winnepesaukee will be restored by removing three-quarters of the trees on the sloping hillside below the castle, helping create what he and Miller hope will become one of the most popular resort settings in the Granite State.



Developer Don Leavitt of Bear Island Restorations in Meredith at a recent press conference at Kimball's Castle in Gilford. Leavitt, together with his partner, Rick Miller, were happy to announce that they have secured the \$3 million in financing needed to complete the renovation of the historic castle into a fine country inn and restaurant. AMSDEN PHOTO

Gilford Castle Restoration Given Height Variance

By ROGER AMSDEN
Union Leader Correspondent

GILFORD — A plan to renovate a historic castle into a tourist attraction moved forward this week when the Zoning Board approved a variance for a 44-foot-high addition.

The site plan for Kimball's Castle will go to the Planning Board next. Developers Don Leavitt and Rick Miller of Historic Inns of New England hope to start the \$3 million project next spring.

The castle, which sits atop Lockes Hill, was built a century ago as an exact replica of one along the Rhine River in Germany. Since the death of the last heir of the castle's builder, railroad owner Benjamin Kimball, it has been sacked and defaced by vandals and stripped of its armor, tapestries and furnishings. The town finally acquired the castle and its 300 acres in 1990.

The variance would allow the addition to exceed the town's 35-foot height restriction. It was approved by a 3-to-1 vote.

The basic structure is still sound, according to Leavitt, who along with his partner reopened the Shaker Inn in Enfield this summer. They are hoping the castle will become one of the top tourist attractions in New England.

They were selected as the developers seven years ago. Plans call for them to acquire the castle and 20 surrounding acres and to build a 40-room inn and restaurant offering spectacular views of Lake Winnepesaukee.

The original castle stonework would be restored, and an addition would expand the castle to nearly 30,000 square feet and provide space for guest rooms, a 170-seat dining room and a kitchen.

A new road from Route 11 to the castle would be constructed, and water and sewer lines would be installed.

Gilford ZBA grants castle year extension

By KRISTA MARRS
Staff Writer

GILFORD — Representatives of Kimball Castle were granted an extension of their variance Tuesday night by the Zoning Board of Adjustments.

Under Gilford Zoning Ordinance Section 16.5, an applicant has one year in which to use a variance and to complete necessary paperwork and procedures to obtain proper permission by local and state agencies.

After discussion of the issue, and further discussion by the board members, Historic Inns of New England was granted the extension of the variance by a vote of 3-0. Chairman Andy Howe and Bill Morrison both abstained from the vote. Alternate member Scott Davis voted favor of the motion.

The variance, which enables Historic Inns to construct an addition to the castle that is higher than the zoning ordinance allows, was set to expire Sept. 29, but will now carry through to Sept. 29, 2000.

Noting that difficulties in completing the specified paperwork in the allotted time period had prevented the project from going forward as required, board members who voted for the extension maintained that the process was not actually being changed, but only continuing, and will hopefully be complete in a year.

Historic Inns plans to turn the castle into a luxury inn and dining room. It purchased the run-down landmark and 20 acres of land on Lockes Hill Road, off Route 11 in the Glendale section, from the town for \$100,000 earlier this year. The company also owns the Red Hill Inn in Center Harbor and the Plymouth Theater, and has developed an historic in at Shaker Village in Enfield.

The castle was built by as a summer home for turn-of-the-century railroad executive Benjamin Kimball.



Kimball Castle

Kimball Castle to be transformed in 2000

A project to transform railroad magnate Benjamin Kimball's former estate into a 40-room luxury hotel and restaurant is expected to clear its final hurdle Tuesday when developers meet with the Gilford Planning Board.

Town Planner John Bobula said the final site plan for the new inn was approved Tuesday and the only hurdle that remains for the project is getting height variance extended.

The proposed addition would add more guest rooms and space for a restaurant. Historic Inns of New England developers Don Leavitt and Rick Miller deserve a great deal of praise for hanging in there the last six years to line up all the financial ducks in a row.

While it wasn't easy to get the needed investors, the final product will serve as a testament that it was well worth it. There is no doubt that Kimball Castle will become a sought after destination for Lakes Region visitors who want to enjoy first-class accommodations along with the area's history, heritage and unmatched natural beauty.

Sacoma paper 1999

Castle Sale Moves Closer To Reality

By NORMAN MILLER
Staff Writer

GILFORD — Kimball's Castle is close to being sold.

Town Administrator Dave Caron told the Board of Selectmen at its meeting this week that the Attorney General's office has agreed with the town's motion to Superior Court to allow a portion of a road to be constructed through part of the conservation land adjacent to the Castle.

The next step, Caron said, is for the Superior Court to review and make a decision on the motion. It is possible, Caron said, the court could make the decision within the next two weeks.

Then the property will be sold.

"It's going to be another piece of the old economic development puzzle," Caron said. "It'll be a nice local landmark, and it'll put that property on the tax roll."

The property is scheduled to be sold to Historic Inns of New England. The company also owns the Red Hill Inn in Center Harbor and

CASTLE, From Page 1

has developed an historic in at Shaker Village in Enfield.

The portion of the property which is being sold is about 20 acres of the 270 acres. The cost to Historic Inns is \$100,000. However, the sale comes with a caveat that the castle has to be restored.

The funds are to be placed into the Kimball Wildlife trust fund for the perpetual maintenance and care of the trail system.

The run-down castle is located on Lockes Hill Road, off Route 11 in the Glendale section of the town. It was built by as a summer home for turn-of-the-century railroad executive Benjamin Kimball. Caron said construction could begin as early as this summer.

Kimball Castle sold, developers plan 32-room addition

By ROGER AMSDEN
Sunday News Correspondent

GILFORD — A deserted and oft-vandalized castle built by a 19th century railroad magnate atop Locke's Hill here more than 100 years ago is about to get a new lease on life.

Kimball Castle, vacant for nearly 40 years, was sold last week by the town of Gilford to Historic Inns of New England, which plans a \$5 million project to restore the castle and build a 32-room addition.

Developers Don Leavitt and Rick Miller, whose historic preservation efforts include the Red Hill Inn in Center Harbor and the Shaker Inn in Enfield, say they plan to turn the castle into one of the finest country inns in all of New England.

"Every room will have a 50-mile view overlooking Lake Winnepesaukee and the White Mountains," said Leavitt, who had originally planned a much smaller addition when he and his part-

CASTLE, Page 1

ner first started working on the project nearly nine years ago.

"We had to double the size of the addition in order to make the numbers work. There just wasn't enough revenue to support the restoration of the castle with a smaller addition," said Leavitt.

The developers paid \$100,000 for the castle and four other buildings on the 20-acre parcel, with those funds going to a trust fund for maintenance and care of a trail system through the 250-acre Kimball Wildlife Preserve which is still owned by the town.

Leavitt said that putting a new roadway from Route 11 to the castle and installation of a sewer line account for \$1 million of the cost of the project.

CASTLE, Page

the property passed to his wife and eventually to his daughter-in-law, Charlotte, who spent summers at the castle until her death in 1960.

Charlotte Kimball established a trust with the stipulation that the land be used to promote wildlife conservation. But there was never enough money in the trust to maintain the property and it deteriorated over the years.

During that time, vandals hauled away things which had once graced the elegant structure: heavy cherry furniture, iron gates, a suit of armor and a unique tapestry, reputed to have been the first ever made on a powered loom, which was made for the 1892-93 Columbian Exposition.

In 1981 the town of Gilford was appointed trustee of the estate by the New Hampshire Attorney General's office and it tried for years to find some way to save the historic structure, one of only two in the town listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Miller and Leavitt first began discussing the castle project with the town of Gilford in 1990 and over a year entered into an agreement with the town to develop a plan for restoring the castle.

They acquired the former Lakeport Railroad Station, which was built during Kimball's tenure as president of the rail line, and plan to incorporate that building into the project.

During the 1980s, Leavitt and Miller successfully restored all six buildings on the 60-acre Red Hill estate in Center Harbor.

After Kimball's death in 1920,



VOLUME 9, NO. 24 THE WEIRS, LAKE WINNIPESAUKEE, N.H., THURSDAY, JUNE 15, 2000



Kimball's Castle, Belknap Point, Lake Winnepesaukee, New Hampshire. I have seen Uncle Ben many times sitting in a large chair upon the broad veranda looking out through the arches at the view before him. On one occasion he said to me, "Where in the world can you find a more superb view, one that has greater diversity of scenery, than the one that lies before us?" It is a remarkable view, seven hundred feet below were the sparkling waters of Winnepesaukee, dotted with its hundreds of islands, each rich with summer verdure extending to the very water's edge.

POSTCARD COURTESY BETH LAVERTUE, LAKE WINNIPESAUKEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BENJAMIN AMES KIMBALL AND HIS HISTORIC GILFORD CASTLE

by Nicholas Richardson
Gilford, NH
— Part One —

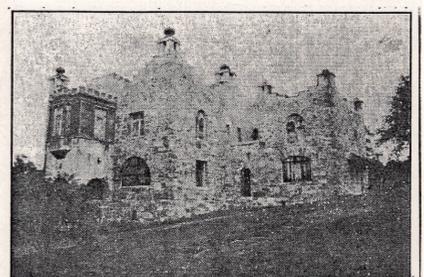
Benjamin Kimball was born in Boscaawen, NH, on August 22, 1833 to Benjamin and Ruth (Ames) Kimball. However, young Benjamin's father died a year after his birth. Upon reaching young adulthood at the age of 16, he joined his older brother John in the Concord Machine Shop. The shop is said to have been unequalled in the entire U.S. because of its massive structure measuring 300 by 65 feet. It had been set up to take care of the area's railroads for over fifty years and therefore the primary business there was that of the repair and construction of railroad equipment.

Benjamin Kimball was a very enthusiastic apprentice and showed special skill in the drafting department. He loved working with machinery and heavy equipment and was advanced rapidly in the shop. However, Benjamin knew that he needed an education to accomplish his goals and resigned from the shop in 1851. He had been educated at Concord High School, Hildreth's Preparatory School in Derry, and then after leaving the shop in 1851, joined the first class

See KIMBALL on page 42

CASTLE, from page 1

The Chandler Scientific apartment at Dartmouth College.



Kimball's Castle, Belknap Point, Gilford, New Hampshire. "Ben was happy with 'the Broads', as he called it."

PHOTO FROM THE PUBLISHERS COLLECTION

Benjamin graduated with a B.S. with highest honors in 1854 and immediately entered the service of the Concord Railroad as a draftsman and machinist. Although only twenty-six, he was a foreman, master mechanic, and then superintendent of the locomotive department within two years of joining. Then, in 1858 he succeeded his brother John as mechanic in charge after a hot debate among the Railroad Board of Directors. No one had ever been given such responsibility at that young an age, but it was decided that the quality of his work warranted the elevation.

The Company's confidence in Kimball was not misplaced, for he dug in and managed his duties with skill and imagination. In 1861 he married Myra Tilton Elliot of Canterbury, who was a teacher in the Concord school systems. She was a great lover of the arts and with Ben owned a collection of fine paintings and art treasures. She led a fairly secluded life, but was relied upon for judgement by her husband outside of his business ventures. Together, they had one son Henry Ames Kimball.

In 1863 the news came

that President Lincoln had freed the slaves and as the newest tender rolled out of the shops, Kimball took his chalk and wrote "Liberty" on its side. From then on, all the models of that equipment were known as Liberty engines.

However, Kimball was determined to stand on his own two feet as a success and for him this job was not the answer. So, in 1865, after eleven years of service, Kimball resigned from the Concord railroad and became a partner in the firm of Ford and Kimball, which manufactured parts for railroad rolling stock and especially car wheels. Not only did this foray into the vast world of business prove to be successful, but also it showed Kimball the many opportunities existing in

the growing railroad business. He now saw the immense possibilities of the railroad industry and resolved to see himself as one of the chief architects of the railroad systems that were sure to come to New Hampshire.

Things soon prospered as Kimball became the founder, director, and president of the Cushman Electric Company of Concord and was elected to the New Hampshire House of Representatives from Concord's 6th Ward in 1870. In 1873, Kimball became the president of the Manchester and North Wear Railroad and in 1874 became the President of the newly reorganized Concord Savings Bank. In 1873 he helped

See KIMBALL on page 43

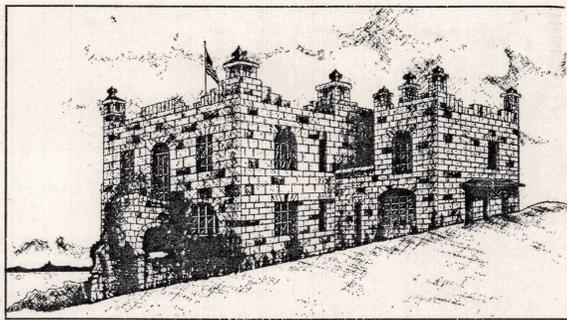
KIMBALL, from page 42

Concord develop a public water system, which was drawn from Long Pond at a cost of \$350,000. He was a delegate at the New Hampshire constitutional convention of 1876 and went on to serve at the conventions of 1889 and 1902. Also, he helped organize the Mechanic National Bank of Concord in 1877, became Vice President in 1880, and President in 1900.

In January of 1879 Kimball got the position he had been waiting for, for years. He succeeded Gov. Onslow Sterns as a director of the Concord railroad and would go on to be the director and finally president of its successor, the Concord and Montreal Railroad. He was also a director of all of the leased railroads connected to the Concord and Montreal.

Kimball was a member of the NH Executive Council 1884, an alternate delegate in the Republican National Convention of 1880, and a commissioner in a convention of commissioners from several states arranging for the celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the United States Constitution held on September 15, 16, 17, 1887, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was a member of the Commission to erect the New Hampshire State Library Building in 1889, the incorporator and director of the Manufacturers & Merchants Mutual Fire Insurance Company, and a member and trustee of the New Hampshire Historical Society. Last but not least, he was a trustee and chairman of the finance committee at Dartmouth College.

During his long affiliation with the railroads of New



KIMBALL'S CASTLE IN GILFORD, N.H.; 1907.

CHARCOAL BY BRUCE D. HEALD

Hampshire, Kimball applied his administrative and mechanical expertise to the upgrade of the systems and he built beautiful new stations using state of the art equipment. He consolidated small connecting systems and continually fought off attempts by the Grank Trunk Line to install a north-south route from Vermont to Boston in direct competition with the Concord and Montreal. The Grank Trunk Plan failed after Kimball had stated his lines efficiently served Boston and that his lines could also handle any and all freight coming from Canada that was destined for Boston or points south. Also, Kimball built a railroad spur from Dover to Glendale titled the Lakeshore Railroad and he appropriately changed the railroad line's name to the Concord, Montreal, and Lakeshore Railroad.

Kimball continued to exert a powerful influence on New Hampshire's railroad lines and soon his line discovered a second growing opportunity in the business

of tourism. They took over ownership of the Lady of the Lake, a steamboat on Lake Winnepesaukee, complimenting his rail monopoly in the Lakes Region. The Lady brought passengers from Alton to Center Harbor and was in hot competition with the steamships Dover, which was owned by the Boston and Maine Railroad, the Chocurara, and the Jim Bell. However, the competition just about ended when the Boston and Maine built the biggest and fastest ship on the Lake, the *Mount Washington*.

Kimball's Castle
In 1893, after an eighteen-year rivalry, competition won out and the *Lady of the Lake* was towed to Glendale

to provide living quarter for his latest project Kimball had taken a trip to Germany and while sailing down the Rhine River gazed in awe at the wondrous castles on the hillsides. So on top of Locke's Hill in Gilford, Kimball set out to build an exact replica of a castle he had seen on the Rhine. It would command a panoramic view of the land around the Lakes Region, and it must have occurred to him that he could keep an eye on his maritime activities, while listening to the soothing sound of his locomotives puffing down the Lakeshore line through Glendale. Kimball's Castle would stand tall as one of the greatest summer homes of New Hampshire for decades to come.

Work started on the castle in 1897 and took two years to finish. Nothing was spared and no detail left out to keep the castle from being a fitting place for his family to spend a good part of the year there, which

See **KIMBALL** on page 44

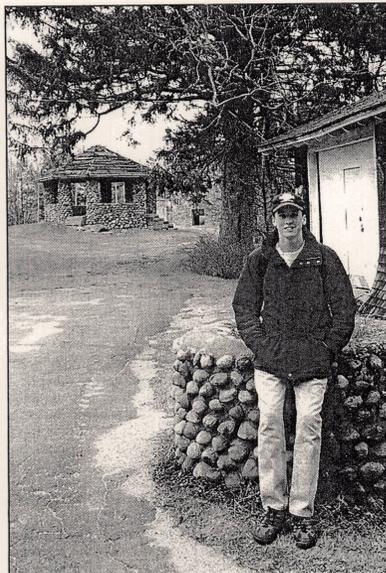
by Nicholas Richardson
Gilford, NH

~Part Two~

CONTINUED FROM LAST WEEK

The furniture in this dining room was very unique for it was made both of oak and black cherry. To the left of the fireplace was a side board made of black cherry that was referred to by many as, "without a doubt the finest piece in the castle". If only it were there for us to view today. To the right of the fireplace was a high-backed bench that was magnificently decorated with eagles and flowers. The bottom of this bench pulled out to reveal a storage space. Beneath the window to the left of the entrance was a large oak table with bulbous legs and two deep drawers. The tops of the windows (in this room), as well as many of the others, were decorated with lovely green bullseyes or spun glass.

The large, round dining table had splendid bulbous carved legs that featured an unusual mustache face. The six chairs, which were made of oak, are equally as interesting for the same mustache face of a man is on the back of each one. However, here the carving is so cleverly done that the curly hair on each side forms an entirely different face when viewed from the right or left profile. To the left of the dining table and the entrance French doors led out to the already described stone porch. It was on this porch that Kimball loved to sit in his rocker during his free time and gaze out over the lakes and mountains. This was a view he said was, "the most beautiful in the world". He also often queried his guests on, "where in the world could one find a more su-



Nick Richardson, stands by the old well at Kimball's Castle, with the Gazebo in the left background.

NICK RICHARDSON PHOTO

per view that lies before us?"

The section of the first floor that connects the dining room to the kitchen served as a pantry that contained cases for glass and china, and on the front

room of the section there was another door serving as an alternate entryway.

The kitchen was large and its many windows made it a bright cheerful place to work. There were two sinks, one of black iron and

one of porcelain, and there were two, deep stone wash-tubs. In the corner there was an old wood stove, which provided the house's occupants with many delicious things to eat. Also, a large built-in icebox provided refrigeration and a door on the outside allowed the iceman to fill the ice chest without disturbing the household. In the center of the room was a small door with a handle that served as a dumbwaiter, which could be raised or lowered by pulling a brass ring in the floor. Cheeses, jams, and preserves could be kept in the cold cellar until needed and then brought to the kitchen using this device. A large oaken side door, much like the main door, provided a side exit and was also decorated with wrought iron. There is a small door at the bottom of

the stairs leading to the servant's quarters located above the kitchen. This door lead to a wood storage area for wood used in the large fireplaces. Stairs from the kitchen lead to two servant's rooms and possibly a bath. Since there is no second story in the connecting section of the castle the servant's quarters are not connected to the bedrooms on the second floor of the main house. The stairs in the dining room leading to the second floor are off to one's right when entering the room and contain two flights of stairs. At the first landing are two steps, which lead to the copper sheathed sitting room Charlotte Kimball loved to sew in. The second flight of stairs continues up to the top of the balcony. Looking down through it

See **KIMBALL** on page 44

KIMBALL, from page 7

one can see the dining room. There are turned banisters and hefty corner posts with pendant drops below.

On the second floor there is a hall that circles the balustrade of the balcony that contains five doors. Four of these doors opened into the main bedrooms, which were located in each corner of the house, each containing a fireplace in the corner. There were also two windows in each bedroom, a triangular closet, and plaster walls and ceiling, making each room identical to the next. Mr. Kimball used the Southwest bedroom while Charlotte Kimball used the Northeast bedroom. Both



Hon. B.A. Kimball's Castle on Lake Winnepesaukee.

PHOTO FROM "NH FARMS FOR SUMMER HOMES" 1907 COURTESY OF DON HARTLAN

Mr. and Mrs. Kimball's bedrooms were furnished in identical maple beds, dressers and commodes.

On the second floor there is also a bathroom that contained a "Duncan Phyfe" tub and two alcoves, one to



Front of Castle facing Lake Winnepesaukee. Note the flag pole holders and the obvious deterioration of the stonework.

NICK RICHARDSON PHOTO

the north, one to the east. The bathroom also contained settees and a large oaken storage closet.

Outside of the castle an octagonal stone gazebo (The Sun House or Round-

house) stands on the lawn South of the castle. It is an open shelter with low, stone walls and eight piers of rounded stone masonry supporting a shingled octagonal roof. Cut granite

steps lead to openings at the four quarters and the ceiling is tongue and grooved boarding with exposed beams and rafters. Mrs. Kimball had this structure built so that she could sit and watch the sun rise and set.

Further across this lawn is a shingle style caretaker's cottage, facing the castle. This was once used by a gardener and is now occupied by a caretaker. A high, rough stone foundation supports its shingled walls and shingled piers on the porch facing north. This house and porch are supported by a broad hip roof. The "eyebrow" window in the roof over the porch steps, the playing bases of the walls, and the porch piers, all enliven this simple but charming structure.

The front door opens directly into the living room,

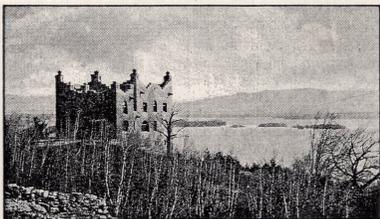
See **KIMBALL** on page 45

KIMBALL, from page 43

usually went from early spring to late October.

The stone used to build the castle was hauled to the building site by oxen from the construction site on the south side of Locke's hill, but since a part of the Lakeshore Railroad just happened to run by the site, the cut granite used for the parapets was hauled by rail from Concord. An English architect, who also made all of the interior furnishings, designed most of the woodwork and ironwork. Then it was shipped over to Boston by boat, where it traveled to Locke's hill on the Lakeshore line. However, oxen carried it directly to the castle and it was then re-assembled inside.

A long service road, which today is the only one accessible by motor vehicles, winds up around the



Kimball's Castle overlooking "The Broads," Lake Winnepesaukee, NH.

PHOTO FROM "LAKE WINNIPESAUKEE, NH" 1902 BY THE G.W. ARMSTRONG D.R. & N. CO.

side of the castle and pulls up behind the group of buildings. The main driveway curves up towards the castle from a now closed off section of Locke's Hill Road, and once entered the property through a massive wooden gate that hung on huge wrought iron hinges from two thick stone gateposts, which still stand there today. They act as fish that act as spouts for the water that ran off the entrance roof. The front door is three inches thick of solid oak and had an oriel window in its center. The door was once decorated with attached chains to the gate and pulled it off with a truck. So the posts still stand and the hinges swing in the breeze with nothing to hold.

Looking from a parapet of the castle one could see with ease the high peak of Rattle-

snake Island along with Locke's, Welch, and Diamond Islands lying directly below. In the center of the view were forty islands including Governor's and Bear Islands. Over the front entrance hung a large wrought iron lantern brought from Germany. Fastened to the each side of the entrance are iron trees that act as spouts for the water that ran off the entrance roof. The front door is three inches thick of solid oak and had an oriel window in its center. The door was once decorated with beautifully hand carved hinges and a doorknocker in the shape of a lion's head, which is in itself a work of art.

There were originally four gargoyles in the shape of dragon's heads, one on

See **KIMBALL** on page 45

KIMBALL, from page 44

each parapet, which served to use it as a sewing room. On the left side of the house, if facing the entrance, there is a large stone porch that provided another great view of the lake and beyond. There are large, arched, semi-circular openings that allowed a viewer to access more of the lovely lake view and there is a metal pole railing built into the stone work. On the wall high above the porch is an iron fixture, which once held a flagpole for all of the passersby on boats to see and it probably caught one's eye while gliding across the lake on a sunny day.

The castle has a large two and a half story, main house section and a one-story section that leads to a smaller two-story kitchen wing, which also served as the servant's quarters on the second floor. There are a total of six chimneys in the house, each topped with a metal chimney cap, for although there are seven fireplaces in the house, the one in the kitchen is directly below the one in the servant's quarters.

One door travels into the front of this section and there is yet another on the right side that is covered by a small shingled roof. Above the main entrance landing is a copper sheathed sitting room with battlements that was added to the castle as an afterthought.

Mrs. Kimball (daughter-in-law of B. A. Kimball) liked to use it as a sewing room, for there was an oriel window on the front and a large window on each side. This must have allowed her to catch all of the sun possible, and the great windows surely provided a breathtaking view looking out over the main driveway to the lake.

The room today is almost a shade of light green after decades of the copper paneling being exposed to the elements. Most of the other windows on the building are stone framed and with an arch at the top. However, all around the base of the house are small square windows no more than a foot high, which are now screened and were probably installed as vents for the basement, which was used only for a heating plant and storage.

Upon entering the castle through the front door and passing the wide steps leading to the second floor, one would enter into an octagonal space, surrounded by an octagonal balcony, lit by an octagonal skylight and supported in part by octagonal columns. The skylight once contained amber glass. This has been referred to as one of the castle's most interesting features.

The first floor of this room was the castle's main room and was used as both a living and dining room.

The gas fixtures, which were later converted to electricity, are of wrought iron and feature a lion's head in their center with an iron ring dangling from its mouth. The walls were made of plaster and the floor of hardwood. There is a large brick fireplace with a polished tile hearth, and large arched windows to the east and west. The fireplace is one of the two on the first floor, for there is also one in the kitchen. This particular fireplace in the dining room was once decorated with a helmet, breastplate, mesh gloves, battle-axe, and spear that adorned the paneling above the fireplace. It is also indicated that at one time there was a gigantic stuffed moose head hanging in the castle's living room.

CONTINUED NEXT WEEK...

KIMBALL, from page 44

which, like the other original rooms in the cottage, has a hardwood floor and horizontal tongue and groove boarding walls. It also has a small mantelpiece with a built-in mirror and a boxed board ceiling. The other original rooms of the house are two bedrooms, a kitchen and a bathroom. In the 1960's a three-room addition was built on to the south. It has concrete block foundation, shingled walls, gabled roof, and modern interiors. Despite some kitchen alterations and the addition the cottage is very much unchanged.

The simpler one-story stable is located nearby. It is like the cottage with its broad hip roof and shingled walls, which splay out at the base. However, on this building there are simple bracketed eaves, a four row band of fish scale shingles, and a louvered ventilator-birdhouse on the roof. The only entryways are a large sliding door on the west and a smaller door to the south. Three stalls and a privy open up to a large general workspace. The walls are strictly utilitarian, sometimes covered by the tongue and grooved boarding. Since the stable is built on a slope, there are hinged doors at the base that swing up to reveal the area where the horse manure was shown



Stone Gazebo with the servant's entrance to the castle on the right.

NICK RICHARDSON PHOTO

ed through a hole in the floor, ending up on the ground under the stable. If one looks under these doors today, they will find a large barrel looking old enough to be there from the days of Mr. Kimball himself.

To the south of the stable is a driver's or hostler's house. It is a small, single-story, gable roofed, shingled structure with two rooms. To the north is a living room/bedroom and to the south is a kitchen. The living room contains the house's original, white door, a dresser, and a white closet in one corner. The

kitchen contains rolled up rugs, a rusted sink, cabinets and shelves. The interior is once again done in tongue

and groove boarding. The one and a half story carriage house is a long shingled building with five

KIMBALL, from page 45

gable roofed icehouse. The structure's concrete foundation and novelty siding on the exterior suggests that it was built at a later time than the other buildings in the complex. The walls are sheathed on the interior with the same tongue and grooved boarding and judging by their thickness were probably once filled with sawdust insulation.

Located on the service road that pulls up to the complex from behind the caretaker's cottage is a shingled, hiproofed, one-room pump house that provided the estate with its water supply. The motor and pump assembly still remains inside this building

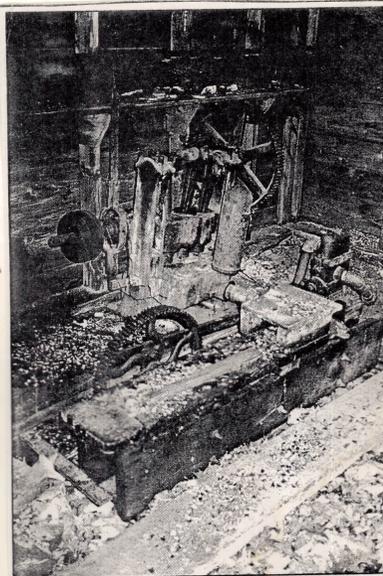
but is most likely not in working order. There are remains of what seems to have been a small chicken house lying just beside the pump house. Also, about thirty feet behind the east wall of the castle's main building there is a rounded stone well measuring about five feet in diameter that is covered with a sheet of plywood, but in Mr. Kimball's days it most likely pumped water to the castle's flower gardens.

The last element of the castle's 280-acre estate that is necessary to describe is its wonderful landscape, which went on for about a hundred acres. The castle's surroundings were once well landscaped with

bays that open out into the service yard to its north between the gardener's house and the stable. The roof is asymmetrical, normally sloped on the south but steeply pitched on the north. Bracketed eaves, (as on the stable) and three gable dormers are the only embellishments to the structure. However, attached to the rear of the carriage house is a shingled, gable-roofed shed opening to the south. Three of the bays are covered by sliding doors and pairs of hinged doors cover the other two. These bays housed vehicles, equipment, and in the westernmost bay there was a shop. The interiors of both buildings are again utilitarian with exposed framing.

Between the driver's house and the carriage house there is a one room,

See **KIMBALL** on page 48



Water pump in the pumphouse used to bring lake water to the castle.

NICK RICHARDSON PHOTO

See **KIMBALL** on page 49

KIMBALL, from page 48

walk down the long winding granite steps today. The Kimbells were great lovers of nature and throughout the woods there were many flowerbeds that once bloomed in profusion on Locke's Hill. Today, the high trees that seem to stretch up to the sky, block the view from almost any part of the property. These were once well pruned and topped in the days of Mr. Kimball to allow full view from his castle. There is more to be described of the castle grounds that neither time nor space can allow for a thorough description.



The Stables at Kimball's Castle are still in good restorable condition. The horses entered up the ramp on the right side of the building. NICK RICHARDSON PHOTO

Benjamin Kimball was happy with "the Broads" as he called it. When it was finished, he used it until he died in it at the age of 86 in July of 1920. The train schedules just happened to fit into his schedule and he traveled between Concord and Gilford in his private car. Mr. Kimball must have wanted to change the castle's look after a while because in 1906 he had a thick coat of white stucco applied to it. Today much of it has fallen to the ground around the castle's foundation, but it can still be seen around the front entrance. However, there is no record of how the local cast watchers of the time react to this new look of wh tucco.

panoramic view Kimball could recall with satisfaction the days when he was so involved with a piece of the action. So far as is known, Kimball never made any effort to participate in the affairs of the town or to become involved socially with area neighbors or acquaintances.

CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

by Nicholas Richardson
Gilford, NH

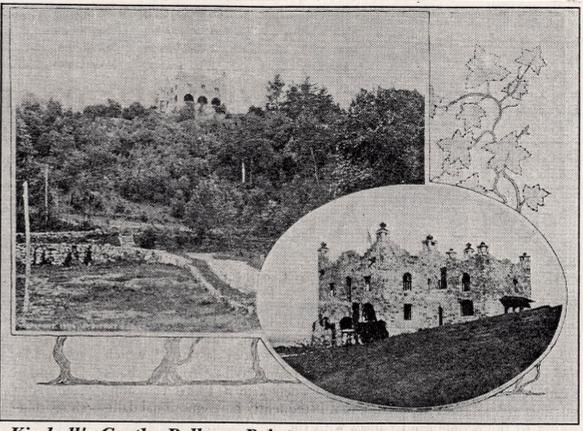
~ Part Three ~
CONTINUED FROM LAST WEEK

Mr. Kimball's body was taken to Concord and buried in the family plot in the Blossom Hill cemetery. His beautiful old Town House in Concord is now the Masonic Lodge and it is said that a rare Tiffany ceiling lamp lighting the main hallway is appraised at \$10,000.

Mr. Kimball's son Henry Ames Kimball had died the year before his father in 1919. After much traveling, he had finally returned to Concord to take over some of the family business responsibilities. When Benjamin Kimball and his wife had both died, Henry's wife, Charlotte Atkinson Kimball, continued to live in the castle during the summer until she died in August of 1960. It is said that in her final years she didn't like living in the castle at all. She found it cold and drafty, dark and dreary, and beset by young vandals who seemed intent on making life miserable for her.

At one time the castle must have been offered for sale. An old Meredith Real Estate broker's brochure stated that at least \$50,000 had been spent on the beautification of the grounds, and the outbuildings had cost \$25,000. In 1897 the castle had cost Kimball only \$50,000 to build. The brochure offered the entire property, land, and buildings for \$100,000. However, Charlotte Kimball, worried about the

property's future, had willed 125 acres or more to the Mary Mitchell Humane Foundation in 1957, then two more tracts of land to the Alford Wild Life Sanctuary, and three more tracts



Kimball's Castle, Belknap Point. PHOTO FROM "LAKE WINNIPESAUKEE" PUBLISHED IN 1909 BY THE G.W. ARMSTRONG DINING ROOM NEWS CO.

were donated in 1958. Finally, in 1959 the castle and remaining property was also deeded to the Mary Mitchell Humane Foundation. The deed called for Foundation management, but allowed the land to be sold to benefit the Foundation. A sum of \$400,000 was also given to the Foundation, but sadly it would never be used for maintenance of the property.

Trustees from this foundation proposed subdividing the property, despite Charlotte's refusal to even consider it when she was alive. The New Hampshire Attorney General became involved because of the plan's contradiction to Charlotte's well-known

wishes. The Attorney General obtained a court order, which prohibited the subdivision of the property because it did not conform with Charlotte's wishes. The Foundation's trustees remained quiet for the time being and installed a caretaker on the property. They proposed to give the castle to the town, but the town backed off when they learned that they would not get all of the property. Then in 1977 in response to Selectman's inquiries, the trustees offered all of the property to the town. Since the Attorney General's office had determined the property could be given to an appropriate organization which would respect

Charlotte's wishes, the Selectmen voted for acceptance of the property and buildings in July of 1978. This also went along with public sentiment, which had begun to favor acquisition of the property. So in 1979 the town voted to accept the property. Although most felt that a revenue producing facility should be kept there, they thought that the town should not expend funds on improvements.

The town of Gilford accepted the property as a gift to use it to match federal improvement funds. However, a technicality required that the town accept it as a gift from a pass through agent. The Natural Science For Youth Foundation pro-

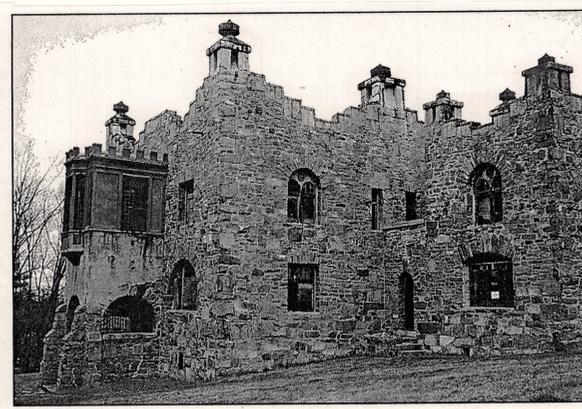
vided this service and deeded the property to the town in July of 1981 after receiving it in April of 1980. After this happened the Attorney General stipulated that the acreage and buildings could never be used for commercial, residential, or industrial use. The Natural Science For Youth Foundation agreed to assist in trust administration, the recovery of the money lost to the Mary Mitchell Humane Fund, funding for property restoration, and program development. So in 1981 the Foundation sent an employee to live in the caretaker's cottage as the beginning of the supervision to a large restoration project. The town established a Kimball Castle Association to advise the Selectmen on the proper management of the property.

In 1980 the town of Gilford received a grant from

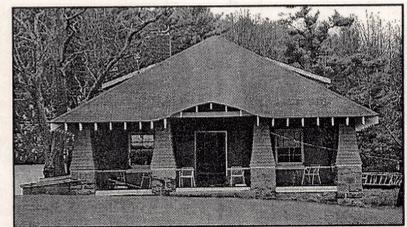
KIMBALL, from page 44

Meredith and owners of the Red Hill Inn in Center Harbor announced that they had obtained the \$3 million in financing needed to complete the restoration of the castle into a fine country inn and restaurant. Also, they would bring up the old Lakeport railroad station, built by Benjamin Ames Kimball, to provide, along with the caretaker's cottage, twenty guestrooms with fireplaces and jacuzzis in them. They would install an 8,500 square foot addition to the 6,000 square foot castle, which would contain a 120-seat dining room and kitchen. They would build a new road from Route 11 to the castle and restore the old view by removing three quarters of the trees on the hillside, which are now blocking the once breathtaking view of the lakes and mountains. However, four years later the castle still remains the same and it is not clear whether the developers still intend to carry out their plan of restoration for the landmark.

Through all these years of being argued over, the castle remained exposed to the elements sitting out in the open on top of Locke's Hill. The castle suffered from moisture damage and vandalism throughout these years. Leaks in the roof and walls have led to plaster, masonry, and beam damage. The castle has been literally stripped by vandals who have taken every piece of rare tapestries, hand crafted furniture, and exquisite paintings from the castle, including just about every item in the list of things that decorated inside the rooms of the castle. It is already mentioned that the gates were ripped off their supports and even a fireplace mantel from one of the bedrooms was taken. Also, the oak banisters on the balcony were stolen and all of the four gargoyles on the castle's parapets were taken. There is hardly anything left inside and all of the stained glass decorated windows are broken, along



Kimball's Castle as it appears today. NICHOLAS RICHARDSON PHOTO



Caretaker's House is still in good condition. NICHOLAS RICHARDSON PHOTO

with every other window in the castle. On a visit to the castle in April 2000, I realized the total state of disrepair that the castle was in. Although it is not written in any papers done on Kimball's Castle thus far, I will state that the building itself is now falling apart. The mortar in between the stones of the castle has begun to fall out in almost every wall and on the back wall of the castle many of the stones forming an arch that once held a beautiful window have fallen to the ground. Also, part of the masonry on the same wall of the castle has fallen to the ground and the area above and beside it looks like it too, could fall down at any time. The small roof above the side door appears to be slowly tumbling to the ground and the tallest cor-

ner of the building looks like it may only have a few years left. If this supporting corner comes down the castle itself is soon to follow. The carriage house is in poor shape along with the stable, driver's house, ice house, pump house, and the caretaker's cottage. The trees, which were once carefully pruned and topped, are now grown up, along with many others, thereby blocking the view that was so beautiful, so long ago. Also, the flowerbeds are dead, most likely from brambles and neglect. So, atop Locke's Hill in Gilford, Kimball's Castle remains in a state of limbo. It is a landmark with a great deal of value that most Lakes Region citizens don't even know exists. The drivers on Route 11 fly by it everyday not knowing that

above them sits a monument to their own heritage. It is a crumbling monument, which within years

will go from a forgotten piece of history to a pile of rubble that once was a piece of history. Kimball's Castle is New Hampshire history slipping away into the abyss of time.

Last issue of this series.



Bibliography:
"Gilford Landmark Crumbling Away", Evening Citizen, Saturday, May 12th, 1984, Author: Jim Moore.

Kimball's Castle: Master Plan, April 1982, Prepared by the Kimball's Castle Association.

"Kimball's Castle Project Gets Financing Package", The Weirs Times, Thursday, October 3, 1996, Author: Roger Amsden.

One Thousand New Hampshire Notables, Article on B.A. Kimball, ©1919.

Set of papers written about Kimball's Castle, Author: George Bingham, 1981.

The Granite Monthly, Article on Kimball's Castle, ©1900.

The Gunstock Parish, Author: Adair Mulligan, ©1995.

Two page description of Kimball's Castle, Author Unknown.

MEET NICHOLAS RICHARDSON

by Bruce Heald
Weirs Times Historian

Periodically, a gifted young writer enters the classroom and renders a paper worthy of publication. Such is the case with a student of my, Nicholas Richardson of Gilford, NH.



For the past three years Nick has attended my classes in English composition, and American History at Holy Trinity Catholic School in Laconia, NH, and for three years, I have noticed a marked development in his writing skills, particularly for in-depth expository and narrative stories.



The author Nick Richardson with his sister, Kimberly at the old stone gates leading to the Castle. NICHOLAS RICHARDSON PHOTO

A month before his graduation I requested the class to compose a research paper concerning a New Hampshire landmark - Nick selected Kimball's Castle, located in his home town of Gilford. Needless to say I was pleased with his subject, but more so with his developmental skill in

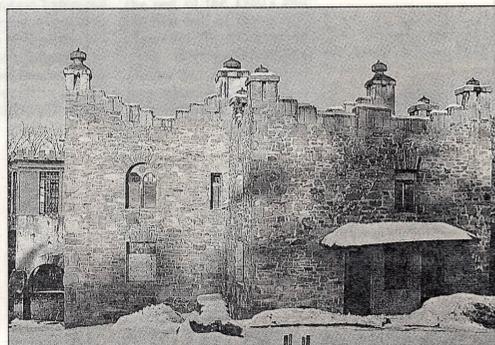
composition, for you see, Nick is only 14 years old, and for an eighth grade student to write with such precision and detail is worthy of note. I told him that I was going to leave a copy of his work with my publisher at The Weirs Times; Nick smiled and said, "OK," expecting nothing to come of

work on historic accuracy, composition and public appeal. Nicholas graduated from Holy Trinity on June 13th as Valedictorian of his class, and will be attending Bishop Brady High School in Concord next year. I was pleased to have Nick as my student.

Couple from Hampstead acquire Kimball Castle

By ROGER AMSDEN
Sunday News Correspondent
GILFORD — A Hampstead couple are the new owners of Kimball Castle, having acquired it last month from Historic Inns of New England, which at one time planned to restore the castle and build a 40-room addition to create an upscale inn and restaurant. Town Administrator Phil Arel said title to the property was acquired last month by David and Mary Jodoiu, who are planning to restore the historic castle, built in the late 19th century by railroad magnate Benjamin Ames Kimball, owner of the Boston, Concord and Montreal railroad. Jodoiu was one of the financial supporters of the Historic Inns' restoration effort and is planning a much less extensive restoration effort, according to Arel,

who said preliminary cost estimates developed by the town when it was trying to sell the property in the late 1980s indicated that restoration of the castle's stonework would cost about \$600,000. Jodoiu obtained approval last summer from the New Hampshire Attorney General's Division of Charitable Trusts for acquisition of the castle and 23 acres of surrounding property and from the town's Kimball Castle Committee. Jodoiu, 36, a computer software CEO, told selectmen last summer that he planned to restore the castle and open it to local residents for tours of the grounds and possibly even link its trail system to a 300-acre nature preserve next to the castle property. He and his family are living in the caretaker's home at the castle.



DAVID JODOIU of Hampstead has bought Kimball Castle in Gilford and is now living there in the caretaker's house with his family as he prepares to restore the castle, which was built in the late 19th century by railroad magnate Benjamin Ames Kimball. Roger Amsden Photo

SEE RELATED ARTICLE

scendants, and the Extension Service. This plan was developed, but the restoration of the property into a natural science education facility was never carried out due to the town not being able to spend the money or voting not to spend that amount of money on the castle's restoration. Nothing was decided about the castle up through

Take this depot and move it

By ROGER AMSDEN
Sunday News Correspondent
GILFORD — A bit of history that has been stored near the town stump dump here for more than eight years — a 1900 railroad station once known as "the pride of Lakeport" — is free for the taking.

It originally hoped to use the railroad station as part of its restoration of Kimball Castle, a stone structure modeled after one that railroad magnate Benjamin Ames Kimball had seen next to the Rhine River in Germany.

"We're taking one last crack at finding someone who is interested in saving it," says Don Leavitt, noting that Kimball had been president of the Boston, Concord and Montreal rail line and had played a role in having the station built in Lakeport. "People had petitioned the rail line for a new Lakeport station to replace the old one that was in the basement of a building near the railroad tracks. They had pleaded with the rail line saying that Lakeport was worthy of something far better than the station it had. And when it was built in 1900 it was known as the pride of Lakeport because of its elegance," said Leavitt.

"We had thought it would be nice to incorporate the station as part of the restoration," said Leavitt, noting that Kimball had been president of the Boston, Concord and Montreal rail line and had played a role in having the station built in Lakeport. "People had petitioned the rail line for a new Lakeport station to replace the old one that was in the basement of a building near the railroad tracks. They had pleaded with the rail line saying that Lakeport was worthy of something far better than the station it had. And when it was built in 1900 it was known as the pride of Lakeport because of its elegance," said Leavitt.

The station will have to be moved to make way for a new aircraft hangar, said Diane Cooper, airport manager. She said the airport authority originally granted permission for the railroad station to be stored at the airport for one year and now wants to lease the land. Leavitt said that Historic Inns

But as plans for restoration of the castle evolved and the size of a proposed addition to it went from 20 to 40 rooms it became apparent that the station would no longer fit into development plans, said Leavitt, noting that an additional problem would be moving the 30-by-40-foot structure up the steep and winding road to the castle. He said that the station, which was nearly dismantled in the mid-1980s and was saved by the efforts of a Lakeport group, "looks like a wreck" but is still structurally sound and has many fine qualities, including matchstick paneling, which make it appealing. "It's a piece of history which would be nice to save. It's free but it will have to be moved," said Leavitt. He urged interested parties to contact his Historic Inns partner Rick Miller at 279-7001.