

OMB NO. 1024-0018
EXPIRES 12/31/84

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received MAR 13 1986
date entered SEP 15 1986

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic "Vancroft"

and/or common Mt. St. George Historic District

2. Location

street & number Brinker Road not for publication

city, town Wellsburg X vicinity of ~~Congressional District~~

state West Virginia code 54 county Brooke code 009

3. Classification

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Home for Aged

4. Owner of Property

name The Knights of Saint George Home Association

street & number 709 Brighton Road

city, town Pittsburgh vicinity of state PA

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Brooke County Courthouse

street & number Main & Seventh Streets

city, town Wellsburg state WV

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Mt. St. George Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes X no

date Winter-Spring, 1985 federal state county X local

depository for survey records Mt. St. George

city, town Wellsburg state WV

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date <u> N/A </u>

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance VANCROFT

Situated in a parklike setting on a high bench overlooking the city of Wellsburg and the Ohio River, Vancroft is almost the perfect picture of the country estate/weekend retreat of the wealthy at the end of the Gilded Age. Placed back from the edge of the bluff and completely surrounded by hills much taller than the bench on which it sits, everthing about this estate, except its gatehouse (now in private hands), is hidden from the eyes of a curious public.

The Vancroft estate was so designed as to create an increasing interest while leaving a sense of disdained mystery in the approaching guest. The visitor drives steadily uphill for almost a mile before rounding a broad curve and emerging suddenly on the park-like Front Farm. Several hundred yard later one first sees the dark mass of the manor house with its contrasting white colonnade. Continuing through well-kept grounds and past structures that are uniquely pleasing to the eye, the visitor sees only the front of the manor house or mansion when they are within the white pergola and confronted by the exquisite, asymmetrical detail of this unique Shingle-style structure. The indirectness of approach, the slow revelation of enticing details, and the preserving of view of the goal of the pilgrimage until the visitors are themselves confronted by it at the very last moment seems almost consciously reminiscent of the plan for the Sacred Way to Phidias' gold and ivory Athena in the Parthenon.

Alden and Harlow of Pittsburgh designed philanthropic institutions and country homes for Andrew Carnegie, the Mellons and other prominent families of Pittsburgh. In 1901 they drew the plans for Joseph B. Vandergrift, the heir of one of Pittsburgh's large steel fortunes. Even at its occupation it was probably unique in West Virginia resembling in style and magnitude the summer places and weekend retreats favored by America's eastern aristocracy, but usually found at Bar Harbor, Maine, or Newport, Rhode Island. Even the barn, hog houses, poultry houses, utility sheds and laborers' residences as well as the support dependencies of the manor house were carefully planned by Alden and Harlow and situated according to the aesthetic tastes of the high style of the late Queen Anne and Shingle Style periods.

The basic appearance of the mansion, the pergola, the structures and plantings are little changed 85 years later; they still testify to the rare aesthetic sensitivity to site and structure which typified this style. Even the untrained eye is aware of the wealth of individual detail and intended asymmetry which greet every movement of the eye while perceiving at the same time the strong cohesion and integration of each structure and all structures into the total setting.

Many of the blueprints of the manor house and other structures still exist and are carefully stored at Vancroft. These include blueprints of all of the elevations of the manor house (but no floor plans), plus floor plans and elevations for many of the other structures. A rough floor plan of the first floor of the manor and a sketch of the entire district is attached to this form.

The present owners of Vancroft also possess an excellent set of early photographs of each of the principal rooms; most of the original furniture has been carefully preserved at the manor house.

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RESOURCES

#1. The beautiful Pergola is the first thing that attracts the visitor's eye and indicates the significance of the mansion. This semi-circular, double colonnade, painted white and in classic Tuscan style, is certainly the largest and most striking pergola in West Virginia. Measuring over 100 feet in diameter and joined to each wing of the mansion by graceful archways, it attracts the visitor's eye to the manor house, while giving the guests for whom the facilities were designed, the sense of a large enclosed forecourt set off from the farm with its industry and labor. The pergola is still intact, although weather and insects have caused considerable deterioration in recent years. (Contributing)

#2. The Manor House is a sprawling mansion in Shingle Style, typical of New England's fashionable "waterin places." The colors are brown and rusty rose -- earth tones. When combined with low roofs, rough-hewn stone turret and stone chimney, gives an effect very much related to the mansion's site. The shingles being flared at the base of the house adds to this effect.

The roofs are shingled with broad gables and flared eaves to incorporate the verandas and porticos. These prominent roof planes have limited ornamentation, but are punctuated by numerous dormers in different shapes, arranged in asymmetrical patterns. Included are several eyebrow dormers. The three-sided veranda is designed to be both an integral part of both the house and the pergola. The flared eaves, with no clear break in the roof, gives the effect of drawing the veranda into the privacy of the mansion, while the Tuscan colonnade binds it clearly to the court of the pergola.

The center front of the manor house is dominated by a broad entry gable with recessed balcony and porch. Only on this gable is there a great variety of shingle shapes. The importance of this entryway is emphasized by the attached octagonal turret dormer with domical roof. Centered in the recessed porch is a wide door.

Each of the wings project forward toward the pergola and balance each other in pleasing asymmetrical ways. The banquet hall or West wing provides the only major exterior surface that is not covered by fish-scaled shingles. Here the wall and large exterior, medieval chimney are made of rough-surfaced, native coarse stone. The long west wall of this wing is accented and decorated by a white framed solarium. The north end of the bedroom or East wing has shingle siding but is dominated by a low circular turret at the northeast corner. This turret is also made of rough-surfaced, native coarse stone and capped by a candle-snuffer roof. The interior chimneys often have decorated brickwork and caps, while the exterior banquet hall chimney has sloped set-offs for weathering.

On entering the manor house, one comes into a large living hall with a grand fireplace. As was characteristic of Shingle Styled houses, the interiors are open, informal and asymmetrical in pleasing ways. In the Japanese Room and the other public rooms there is some emphasis on beamed ceilings and rich, dark paneling. Both the furnishings, most of which is still intact, and the decorations manifest a studied informality.

The condition of the manor house is very good. The only major changes have been the conversion of the two rear bedrooms to an office and conference room for the

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management of the Knights of St. George Home for the Aged and the conversion of the swimming pool into a beautiful and appropriate chapel. Neither modification has affected the exterior appearance or the internal lines of the manor house. (Contributing)

#3. The Club House or Retreat House is a stucco building and designed as a gaming place for Mr. Vandergrift and his friends. The septagonal portion provided a gallery and fighting pit for cock fights. Attached to that were a small dining room and offices. This facility has been transformed to a retreat house for religious and other groups without changing its essential lines.

The roof is shingled. The domical roof on the septagonal section is dominated by a cupola and is flared at the base. This roof is broken by seven gables having small windows to admit light to the observer's balcony. The roof on the dining room/office wing is hipped, as are each of the gables. Walls are stucco and painted ochre with white trim. (Contributing)

#4. The Spring House is one of the most attractive structures at Vancroft. Nearby is a large circular fountain. The spring house itself is a small square building with adjacent turret built of rough-hewn, native, course stone; the roofs are shingled. The low pyramidal roof of the spring house proper has wide overhangs, supported by a battery of white decorative brackets. The turret on the southeast corner contained a recessed circular stairway and has a candle-snuffer roof. The gradual upward slope of the rough-surfaced, native, stone retaining wall, coupled with the broad pyramidal roof of the spring house, culminating with the candle-snuffer roof of the circular turret, gives this facility the visual effect of rising out of the very slope and bedrock of the hillside on which it is located. This effect is accented by the adjacent circular fountain. (#14) (Contributing)

#5. The Race Track provided both oval and figure-eight race courses for Mr. Vandergrift, a well-known horseman, and his guests. The rough-surfaced, native, coarse stone gates are still in place and the track is still visible. The Knights of St. George Home for the Aged has converted this shaded glen into a tasteful cemetery for their deceased. (Contributing)

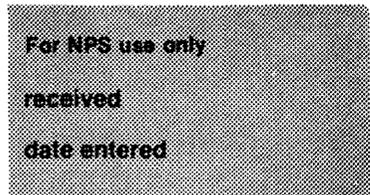
#6. The Grotto was built of fieldstone rubble shortly after the Knights of St. George took ownership of Vancroft in 1926. The slope of the stone walls, its situation within a shady glen and against a natural bank on the rolling hilltop, as well as the materials of which it is made, all demonstrate an unusual awareness of the aesthetic values of Shingle-Style architecture. (Contributing)

#7. The Farm Manager's House is a two-story white residence with clapboard siding. The front is dominated by a high-peaked gable. A large slant bay window dominates the south side and is topped by a five-sided hipped gable. The rear roof is a shed roof with flared eaves like the salt-box houses of New England which so influenced Shingle-Style architecture. (Contributing)

#8. The Farm Engineer's House is a two-story, stucco house painted and earthy burnt orange and trimmed in white. The shingle roofs are flared to integrate the veranda. On the southeast corner is a large circular turret with a candle-snuffer roof. (Contributing)

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9. The Farm Laborers' Residence¹ is a simple square house with a pyramidal roof. The fishtail shingle siding is a dark green, going almost to the ground. (Contributing)

#10. The Farm Laborers' Residence² is a simple square house with a pyramidal roof. The fishtail, dark green shingle siding covers all sides to the ground. (Contributing)

#11. The Mill is now used as an implement storage shed and workshop. Its foundation is rough-surfaced, course stone. The shingled, Jerkin-head roof with clipped gable repeats the lines of the roof and gables in the dining section of the Club House. The siding is dark green fishtail shingles, accented by banks of white trimmed double-hung windows. (Contributing)

#12. The Barn is a 2½-story structure over a high basement. The foundation walls are rough-surfaced, course stone and the siding is white borad and batten. The silo, with candle-snuffer roof, gives this structure an appearance sympathetic to the architectural style of this country estate. (Contributing)

#13. The Apple House is a simple dark brick building with a hipped shingled roof. It conforms to the style of other buildings at Vancroft (cf., e.g., the roof of the dining room wing of the Club House). (Contributing)

#14. The Fountain is located north and west of the Spring House (#4) and is a contributing object. Located in a basin surrounded by trees, the Spring House, the Mill (#11) and the Barn (#12), the large, round, concrete pool with the dancing waters and sub-aquatic lights made a display in the Vancroft park. The catch-basin is about 20 feet in diameter and is surrounded by a walk. (Contributing)

Situated behind the Manor House (#2) is a 1926 brick addition constructed as a home for the aged by the Knights of St. George. This brick addition is tastefully designed in accordance with height, scale and massing characteristics of the parent block; it is a contributing element that does not obtrude upon the ambience of the complex. Also among the trees near the Manor House is a 1946 addition which, though unobtrusive, does not meet the National Register age requirement criterion.

CONTRIBUTING AND NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

Contributing Buildings	10
Contributing Structures	2 - Pergola, Grotto
Contributing Objects	1 - Fountain
Noncontributing Resources	2 - 1946 nursing addition; 1926 addition
Contributing Sites	1 - Race Track
Total Contributing Resources	13
Total Noncontributing Resources	2

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The 1926 addition is unobtrusively attached to the manor house rear main block.

The 1946 addition stands north of the main block and is connected to the original unit by a narrow hyphen.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below				
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation	
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)	

Specific dates 1901 - 1915 **Builder/Architect** Alden and Harlow, architects

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Designed in 1901 as the country estate and working farm of one of Pittsburgh's leading entrepreneurial heirs, the significance of Vancroft today is primarily architectural. Among the residential structures of West Virginia, it is the best preserved and most extensive statement of Shingle-Style architecture.

Joseph B. Vandergrift came from one of America's oldest and most distinguished families. The Vandergrifts were early leaders in New Holland. Prominent in the development of industry and transportation, the Vandergrifts played an important role in the history of the Hudson Valley.

Joseph B. Vandergrift's father, Captain Jacob Jay Vandergrift, died just shortly before Vancroft was built. He was one of Pittsburgh's wealthiest and most prominent men, according to the Pittsburgh Gazette (7 December 1899). From cabin boy, to steamboat captain, to owner of a steamboat, he rose steadily in Ohio River trade. He developed the system of pushing barges (instead of towing them), which is now universal in river commerce. In these early ventures he was primarily involved in transporting coal.

Early in the Civil War Captain Vandergrift became active in the petroleum industry. He was one of the first men to transport oil by river barge and also established the first major oil pipeline transit system. He became a significant producer, transporter and refiner of petroleum. He was always closely identified with John D. Rockefeller and Standard Oil Company.

Captain Vandergrift was also a pioneer in natural gas production in the United States. In 1875, he and his associates in the Natural Gas Company, Ltd., were responsible for the first natural gas line of any importance in this country connecting the gas wells of Saxonsburg, Pennsylvania, with the steel mills at Sharpsburg.

In many ways Vancroft may be considered the apex of the evolution to Shingle-Style architecture from the studied ornateness of the Queen Anne style. Although it would be typical of the fashionable "watering places" of New England, Vancroft is no mere copy. The arrangement of the manor house, the choice of the site, the pleasing arrangement of the plantings and roadways in a park-like setting, and the way each structure seems to fit or rise out of its particular terrain reflects aesthetic values which Frank Lloyd Wright would soon make conscious. The effect of both architecture and landscape at Vancroft is quiet and rational, integrated throughout and with the site. Thus, in both its level of integration, the number of integrated structures and sites, the size of the district, and the architectural details (e.g., the pergola, the spring house) are unique to West Virginia.

The unusual publication of the architect's preliminary sketch of the manor house as the cover photo for the Pittsburgh Bulletin on 1 June 1901 is an indication that the architects, the owner and the discerning public recognized the architectural and aesthetic significance of the proposed estate. Located on the bluff above the Pleasant Avenue mansions, the country homes of commercial and industrial entrepreneurs of an earlier generation, Vancroft culminated effectively that local development. Each

9. Major Bibliographical References

Blueprints, Photographs, Maps -- located at Vancroft
 Brinker, William E., Jr., Vancroft, Brinker Croft, Mount St. George
 (a typed history and photo story at Vancroft).
Pittsburgh Bulletin, 1901, 1903.
The Pittsburgh Gazette

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 59 acres

Quadrangle name Steubenville, Ohio East

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	1	7
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5	3	3	9	4	10
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4	4	5	19	0	4	10
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 Zone Easting Northing

B

1	1	7
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5	3	4	6	0	10
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4	4	5	19	2	3	10
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 Zone Easting Northing

C

1	1	7
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5	3	4	5	10	10
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4	4	5	19	5	5	10
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D

1	1	7
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5	3	3	8	0	10
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4	4	5	19	3	8	10
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Verbal boundary description and justification Beginning at a post on the north side of Miller Road corner of the heirs of G. W. Caldwell N 71°0'E for 2150 feet to a stake, thence S19°0'E to a stake, thence S71°90'W for 1200 feet to a stake, thence N19°0'W to the point of beginning containing a total of 59 acres.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dr. Hiram J. Lester, Project Director

organization The Knights of St. George Home Assoc. date 25 September 1985

street & number The Hibernia telephone (304) 829-7941

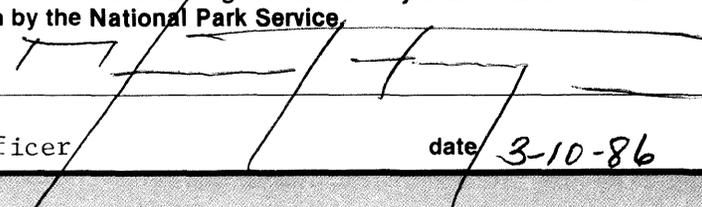
city or town Bethany state West Virginia 26032

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

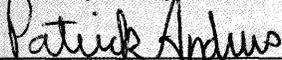
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title State Historic Preservation Officer date 3-10-86

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register



date 9/15/86

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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generation before had made their wealth from the commerce and industry of the Ohio Valley and had then built a country or suburban mansion on the bluff utilizing the aesthetic values of architectural styles of the period to affirm their own stations and utopias. The artistic country estate of Vancroft brought together the best of the Queen Anne and Classical revivals in a truly American creation fitted to its setting for telling the development of the Prairie style of American architecture. Vancroft, in its context, is simply higher on the bluff and more Eleusinian.

The basic appearance of the mansion, the pergola, the structures and plantings are little changed 85 years later; they still testify to the rare aesthetic sensitivity to site and structure which typified this style. Even the untrained eye is aware of the wealth of individual detail and intended asymmetry which greet every movement of the eye while perceiving at the same time the strong cohesion and integration of each structure and all structures into the total setting.

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The Joseph B. Vandergrift family suffered a personal tragedy early in their residency at Vancroft and vacated the property. It was purchased in 1911 by William M. Brinker, a prominent Pittsburgh real estate developer and the builder of the first large apartment building in that city. Brinker renamed the property Brinker Croft and sent his son to manage it.

For ten years the Brinkers tried to make a financial success of Brinker Croft. They operated the farm with an aim to produce fruit, vegetables and meat for market as well as for the consumption of the families in residence and employed there.

Next, the Brinkers sought to develop and promote it as BRINKECROFT, THE MILLION DOLLAR SUMMER RESORT. Only one automobile club, the one from Wilkinsburg, Pennsylvania, is known to have made a weekend excursion to the "resort."

In 1915 The Brinkekroft Film Company was organized under the laws of West Virginia. This may be West Virginia's pioneer film-making operation. Stock was issued in October of that year and George F. Carson was contracted to produce a motion picture from a scenario entitled "A Real American...Boyhood Trials and Manhood Triumphs." No prints of this film are known to exist.

Vancroft was designed as a working farm with architecturally planned dairy barns, horse stalls, swine and poultry houses, shop and utility sheds. It is still farmed under the supervision of the Knights of St. George, a division of the William Penn Association. Today the Knights of St. George operate a non-sectarian and non-profit home for the aged on the grounds, but the spiritual nature of the community is clear. They have redeveloped the club house as a retreat house for overnight facilities for small groups to use in training sessions, conferences and spiritual-life retreats. They also make bedrooms and dining services available to individuals who are on personal spiritual retreats.

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The Knights of St. George and The William Penn Association continue to maintain the park-like setting of Vancroft. Within the district the original plantings and the extensive lawns are carefully maintained as they were originally designed. Large trees surviving from the early period stand close to buildings where they were meant to provide shade for farm personnel and estate guests. Historically, the grounds were open to provide pleasant vistas; the grass cover was always closely cropped. The manor house and environs, locally termed the "front farm", were designed for the pleasure and privacy of owners and guests who might stroll leisurely among the trees and shubbery. The pergola was built to provide guests with an especially idyllic promenade.

Formal geometrically patterned gardens with boxwood plantings, etc., are not present at Vancroft and do not appear to have been a dominant form of landscaping on the estate.

The unique significance of Vancroft, which arises from its architectural style, aesthetic integrity, stiking detail and good state of preservation is now being recognized as bus touring companies and others have contracted the rights to include Vancroft on regular tours of the tri-state area.

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Period and Areas of Significance

The significance of Vancroft derives from its unusual architectural styling and placement of buildings which were the result of the ambitions of Pittsburgh entrepreneur Joseph B. Bandergrift to have a large country estate suitable for both entertaining and farming. The complex remained an important retreat and gentleman's farm from the date of construction in 1901, until about 1915 when its agricultural role declined as the result of business experimentation on the part of the second owner, William M Brinker. Vancroft was thus an regionally important ensemble of professionally designed buildings in a suitable period style, and a large-scale agricultural operation whose components are still in use.

Vancroft's farming facilities were among the most elaborately planned in the state's northern Panhandle. The barn, hog houses, poultry houses, utility sheds and laborers' residences, as well as the support dependencies of the manor house, were carefully planned by architects Alden and Harlow and sited according to the requirements of the late Queen Anne and Shingle-style periods. In addition to livestock husbandry, the estate/farm produced fruit, vegetables and meat for market as well as for the consumption of the families in residence. The grouping of buildings at Vancroft, such as dairy barns, horse stables, swine and poultry houses, shop and utility sheds, etc. form a significant complex of agricultural facilities in West Virginia's northern Ohio Valley.

Because the period of significance, 1901-1915, substantially antedates the period of accupancy of the estate as a religious and senior care facility, the areas of significance for "religion" and "social/humanitarian" are omitted from the nomination. The 1926 addition accordingly is categorized as a non contributing element in the Vancroft/Mt. St. George Historic District nomination.

For reference to documentation depicting the 1926 and 1946 additions, see photo series 1-8.

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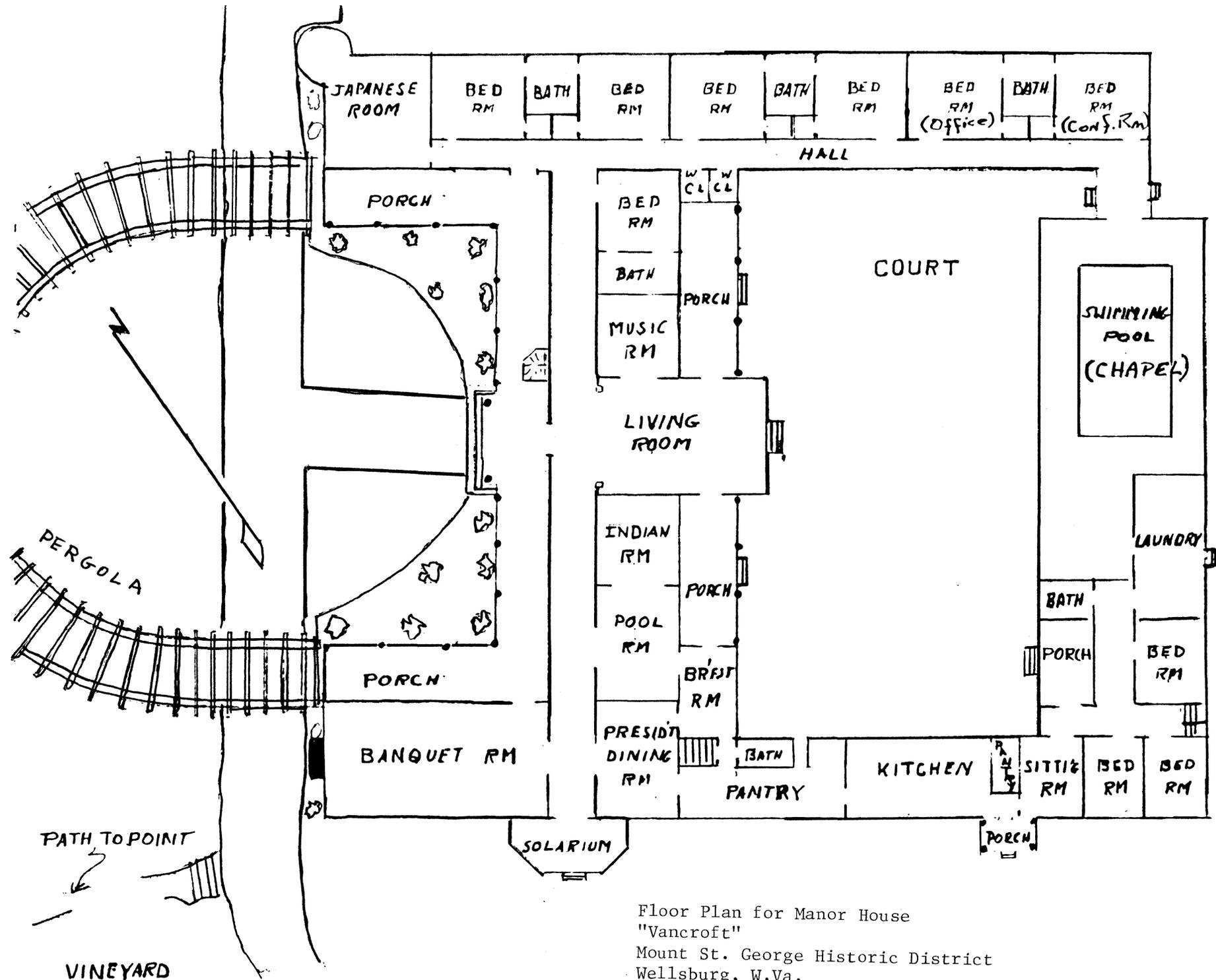
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Boundary Justification

The boundary of the Mt. St. George Historic District was chosen to enclose a complex of buildings and related dependencies which convey a strong sense of historical relationship due to location, design, and setting. The extent of the boundaries generally follows the historic district's loop road within and about which the resources of the district are concentrated. The road and estate buildings are visually concentrated on a level bench behind which a higher ridge rises to form a natural backdrop. Within this level "front farm" the buildings, all with marked design and functional relationships, are enclosed with a boundary line that generally approximates the rectilinear concentration point of district resources.



Floor Plan for Manor House
 "Vancroft"
 Mount St. George Historic District
 Wellsburg, W.Va.

[SKETCH PLAN]

