

HISTORY OF THE “COTTAGE” AT MILL GROVE

N. Powell 8/13/2010 rev. 10/21/2011

PROPERTY OWNERSHIP: Skipping over the earlier history of the property and going to the 1890s:

- 1892 – from Clinton Rorer (High Sheriff) to William Henry Wetherill (by purchase), bringing the property back into the Wetherill family
- Wm. H. Wetherill begins to restore the Mill Grove house due to its run-down condition. He collects Audubon related material to hang in the Mansion, and he invites & hosts many individuals and groups, including Audubon Societies across the country, to come visit Mill Grove. Many other property improvements made during this period: porch & pantry added to mansion; circular stone garage added to west end of Barn; probably the stone wall fences added to property at this time & stone columns at entrance to drive; Cottage (Farm House) built.
- 1927 – Wm. H. Wetherill to son, Herbert J. Wetherill (by will)
- 1951 – H. J. Wetherill to Montgomery County by purchase
- 1951 – Montgomery County as the Audubon Shrine & Wildlife Sanctuary, a.k.a Mill Grove
- 2003/2004 – property management enters a new phase of a public/private partnership under a 50 yr. M.O.U. between the owner, Montgomery County, and the National Audubon Society

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1905

- The Cottage was built in 1905 in the “Adirondack” style.
- Is it a Sears prefabricated house? Pre Dave Hagner, a person in Audubon village saw something in or behind the fireplace one time that said “Sears.”

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE: “Arts & Crafts” or Bungalow styles, and/or Adirondack style

- Arts & Crafts, Bungalow: the building’s architecture falls into these styles which were popular at the turn-of-the-century and into the early 20th c. These features include the massed windows, string course, overhanging eaves, and perhaps the little “eyebrow” windows in the roof.
- Adirondack: refers to a rustic architectural style derived from Swiss/German Alpine mountain houses constructed of wood and with roofs steeply pitched and with extensive overhangs in order to shed heavy snow accumulation. This style developed in the 1860s by architect Asher B. Durant and used in the “Great Camps” of the Adirondacks up into the early 20th century. Style spread westward and used for some of the great lodges in National Parks such as Yellowstone. The style has seen a resurgence of popularity in the Adirondacks and elsewhere in the U.S. in the late 20th c. – early 21st c.

COTTAGE’S ARCHITECT: Herbert Johnson Wetherill (1873-1955), son of the owner

- A photograph of the Cottage in the Mill Grove files is signed “H.J. Wetherill, Architect”
- From the *American Architects and Buildings* database: born in Philadelphia, PA, son of Wm. H. & Elizabeth P. Wetherill. Studied architecture at the University of Pennsylvania for nearly a year and a half. Gained office experience at the firms of Cope & Stewardson, Wilson Brothers, Walter Smedley, and Boyden & Taylor. Opened his own office in Oct. 1899 and remained in operation through at least 1922. His practice was primarily residential, although he did design some alterations to St. Mary’s Protestant Episcopal Church at 39th & Locust Sts. in 1912.