

Town of Washington Zoning Board of Appeals

Walbourne Knoll: Past, Present and Future

By S. L. Martin

8 New Preston Hill Road



Note: All Historical Photos Provided by Gunn Memorial Museum

Walbourne Knoll: The Past

- Walter Burnham was a son of Daniel Burnham and Laura Patterson. He was born in New Preston on August 19th 1832. He married Edna Smith. He died in New Preston on September 11, 1913, age 81. He was an industrialist of the time and owned a company that manufactured carriage springs as well as buildings in New Preston Village.
- The home at 8 New Preston Hill Road was built in 1894 for Walter Burnham and his family.
- Walter Burnham named his home, “Walbourne Knoll”. It was designed by George Barber and built by T. Soule and Co., Jerome Titus, Superintendent. Jerome was a Washington Civil War soldier musician who served in the 2nd CT under Walter Burnham. He and Walter are both buried in New Preston Village Cemetery, New Preston, CT.
- The home was considered ”state of the art” for its time with amongst other things, gas lighting.
- The driveway continued through an elegant porte cochère to the back of the house to a carriage house and stable and then continued around the east side of the house back to New Preston Hill Road.
- In addition, a stone walkway existed from the front entryway to the main road as can be seen from the photo.



Walbourne Knoll circa 1895

Walbourne Knoll: The Past

- As a younger man, on August 9, 1862, Walter Burnham enlisted at the age of 30. He served as a Second Lieutenant in the 19th Infantry Regiment of Connecticut Volunteers and later in the 2nd Heavy Artillery Regiment. He was promoted up the ranks to Full Captain on May 4, 1864. Five months later, he was wounded on October 19th in Cedar Creek, Virginia. He was again promoted to Brevet Major on January 23, 1865. His brother, Dayton, assisted him throughout his military career as an Aide/Captain. Brevet Major Burnham was mustered out on February 4, 1865.
- On December 4, 1908, Walter and his brother Dayton sold property to the New Preston Village Cemetery Association for one dollar, giving the Association all rights for the purpose of burials.
- Walter Burnham funded the construction of the Civil War monument in the New Preston Village Cemetery. The monument is located just off Baldwin Hill Road.
- From his home at 8 New Preston Hill Road, Walter could look out his bedroom window and see the Civil War Monument.



Civil War Monument in New Preston Village Cemetery funded by Walter Burnham

Walbourne Knoll: The Past

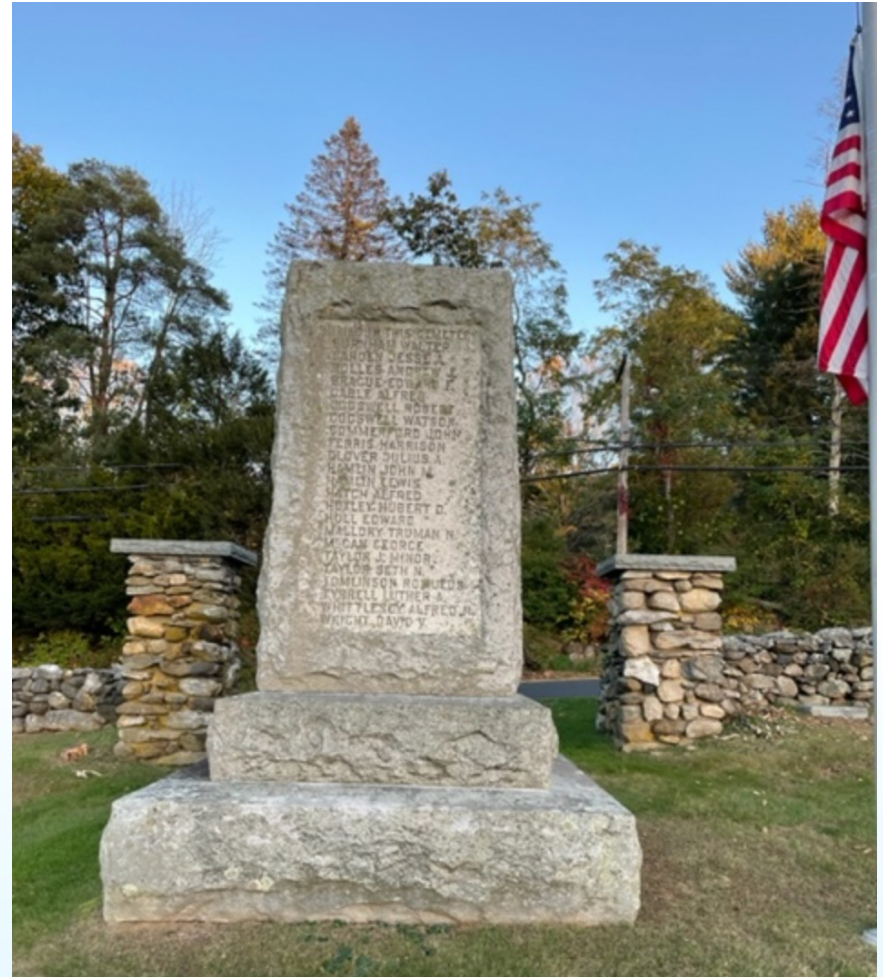
- The east side of the Monument reads:
“A Memorial To the Soldiers Who Served Faithfully and Honorably In The Civil War 1861-1865 Erected by a Comrade Major Walter Burnham”.



Civil War Monument in New Preston Village Cemetery funded by Walter Burnham

Walbourne Knoll: The Past

- The west side of the Monument reads:
- “Buried In This Cemetery Burnham
Walter ▪ Barden Jesse A ▪ Bolles
Andrew J. ▪ Brague Edward F. ▪
Cable Alfred ▪ Cogswell Robert ▪
Cogswell Watson ▪ Commerford John
▪ Ferris Harrison ▪ Glover Julius A. ▪
Hamlin John M. ▪ Hamlin Lewis ▪
Hatch Alfred ▪ Hoxley Hubert D. ▪
Hull Edward ▪ Mallory Truman N. ▪
McCan George ▪ Taylor J. Minor ▪
Taylor Seth N. ▪ Tomlinson Romulus ▪
Tyrrell Luther A. ▪ Whittlesey Alfred
N. ▪ Wright David V.”



Civil War Monument in New Preston Village
Cemetery funded by Walter Burnham

Walbourne Knoll: The Present

- Presently, Walbourne Knoll has fallen into disrepair; The veranda and porte cochère are no longer present.
- Without the veranda anchoring the house, the house appears top heavy.
- The house was in foreclosure and had been unoccupied for over 3 years without ongoing maintenance, electricity, heat or running water.
- The disrepair is evidenced by, among other things, water damage, mold, trash, collapsed plaster, wood damage, insulation damage, electric damage, broken windows leaking roof and vandalism as well as significant overgrowth of vegetation and dead trees to the exterior.



Walbourne Knoll Today

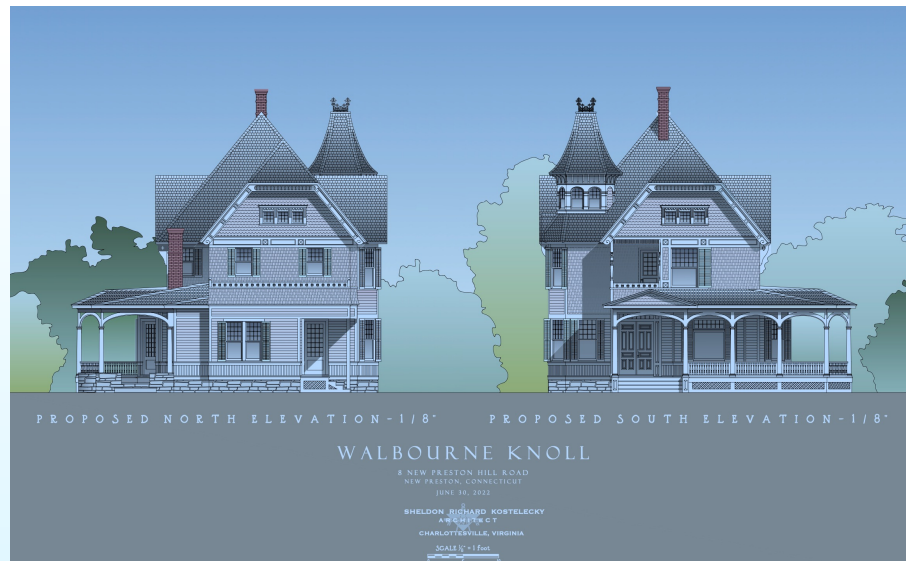
Walbourne Knoll: The Present

- The outside and inside of the house reflects the adverse effects of years of abandonment, neglect and vandalism as evidenced by these sample photos.



Walbourne Knoll: The Future

- The plans for renovation include replacing the veranda so as to provide an architectural anchor in keeping with the original veranda.
- The original renovation goal was to replace the porte cochère and veranda along the driveway west of the house; however zoning regulations and safety issues precluded this.
- The best alternative was to add back the front veranda and wrap around the east side of the house as shown in the proposal.
- The renovation / restoration has been guided by three key principles while keeping within the Washington Zoning Regulations: i) Remain true to the language of Victorian architecture wherever possible; ii) Update the living standards to those of modern day; and iii) Consider safety as paramount.
- These are the principles that have formed the Proposal before the Zoning Board of Appeals.



Walbourne Knoll: The Past, Present and Future

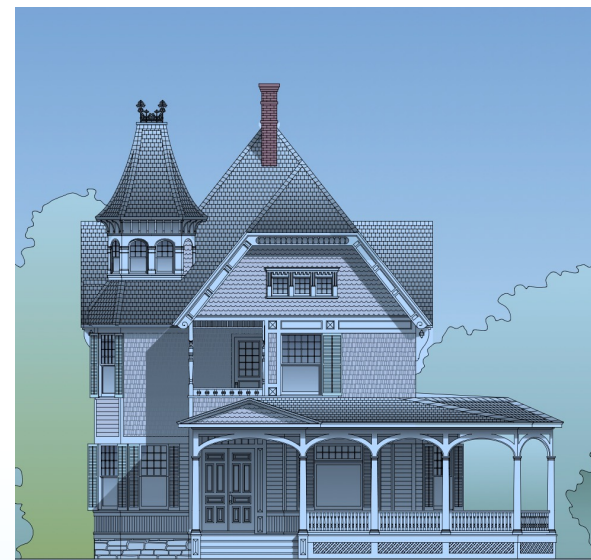
- It is hoped Walbourne Knoll will be around into the centuries to come.



The Past (circa 1895)



The Present



The Future

Drawn by Sheldon Richard Kostecky