United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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

city, town Wellsburg

state West Virginia code 54 county Brooke code 009

3. Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Present Use</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>district</td>
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<td>agriculture</td>
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<tr>
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<td>commercial</td>
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<tr>
<td>structure</td>
<td>both</td>
<td>work in process</td>
<td>educational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>site</td>
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<td>in process</td>
<td>entertainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>object</td>
<td>N/A in process</td>
<td>Accessible: yes: restricted</td>
<td>government</td>
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<tr>
<td>object</td>
<td>N/A being considered</td>
<td>Accessible: yes: unrestricted</td>
<td>industrial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Owner of Property

name The Knights of Saint George Home Association

street & number 709 Brighton Road

city, town Pittsburgh

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 no

date Winter-Spring, 1985

federal state county local

depository for survey records Mt. St. George

state WV
7. Description

Condition
___ excellent   ___ deteriorated  Check one  Check one
___ good         ___ ruined      unaltered    ____ original site
___ fair         ___ unexposed   ___ altered    ____ moved    ____ date    ____ N/A

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.

(cont'd. on page 2)
#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.

#2. The Manor House is a sprawling mansion in Shingle Style, typical of New England's fashionable "watering 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 course 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 course 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
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.

#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.

#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 accentuated by the adjacent circular fountain.

#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, course 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.

#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.

#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.

#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.
#9. The Farm Laborers' Residence\(^1\) is a simple square house with a pyramidal roof. The fishtail shingle siding is a dark green, going almost to the ground.

#10. The Farm Laborers' Residence\(^2\) is a simple square house with a pyramidal roof. The fishtail, dark green shingle siding covers all sides to the ground.

#11. The Mill is now used as an implement storage shed and workshop. Its foundation is rough-surfaced, course stone. The singled, 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.

#12. The Barn is a 2\(\frac{1}{2}\)-story structure over a high basement. The foundation walls are rough-surfaced, course stone and the siding is white bord and batten. The silo, with candle-snuffer roof, gives this structure an appearance sympathetic to the architectural style of this country estate.

#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).
8. Significance

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Period</th>
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Specific dates  1901  Builder/Architect

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.

In many ways it may be considered the apex of the evolution to Shingle-Style architecture from the studied ornamentation 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 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 Elysian.

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, both of which are religious fraternal orders. Today the Knights of St. George operate a non-sectarian and non-profit home for the aged on the grounds. They have redeveloped the club house as a retreat house for overnight facilities for small groups to use in training sessions, conferences and spiritual live retreats. They also make bedrooms and dining services available to individuals who are on personal retreats.

The unique significance of Vancroft, which arises from its architectural style, aesthetic integrity, striking 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.
10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 59 acres
Quadrangle name Steubenville, Ohio East
Quadrangle scale 124,000

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>state</th>
<th>code</th>
<th>county</th>
<th>code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dr. Hiram J. Lester, Consultant and Project Director
organization The Knights of St. George Home Association
street & number The Hibernia
telephone 304-829-7941

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

   national   X 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 March 7, 1986

[Signature]

[Signature]

[Signature]
MOUNT ST. GEORGE
HISTORIC DISTRICT
BRINKER ROAD
WELLSBURG, BROOKE
CO., WEST VIRGINIA

UTM:
A. 17/533 940/4459 040
B. 17/534 600/4459 230
C. 17/534 500/4459 550
D. 17/533 880/4459 380

QUAD
STEU'RENBERG EAST
W.VA., PA., OH.

7.5

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Revised in cooperation with State of Ohio agencies
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and USCE
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial
photographs taken 1954. Field checked 1958. Revised
from aerial photographs taken 1966. Field checked 1968
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grids based on West Virginia coordinate system, north zone,
Pennsylvania coordinate system, south zone and Ohio coordinate system,
north zone. 1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, ticks,
zone 17, shown in blue.
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where
generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked
The state boundary as shown represents the approximate position of the
low water line as determined from U.S. Corps of Engineers Ohio River
charts, surveyed 1913, and supplementary information
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
Ohio area lies within the Old Seven Ranges.
Land lines based on the Ohio River Base.