

# “Leahead”

## The Henry W J Bucknall Estate

### Glen Cove, Long Island

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Located on a high bluff overlooking Long Island Sound in the Red Spring Colony section of Glen Cove, “Leahead” was the estate of wealthy English cork importer Henry W J Bucknall.

Bucknall was born on 3 November 1857 in Sant Feliu de Guíxols (written as “San Felin de Guixols” in his obituary), one of the main ports on the Costa Brava for the exportation of Spanish cork. His father was Henry M S Bucknall, a member of an English mercantile house of Henry Bucknall and Sons. The company had been involved in exporting cork from Spain

and Portugal and manufacturing cork stoppers since 1742. His mother was Anita Teresa Victoria Arxer.

At the age of 14, Bucknall was sent to Uppingham School in Rutland, then one of the leading boys’ boarding school in England. Under the leadership of Rev. Edward Thring, the school had developed a progressive educational program. In an era where most boarding schools concentrated on grammar, classical studies and Latin, Thring expanded Uppingham’s curriculum to include music, art, romance languages, science, and his-



tory. Bucknall exhibited an aptitude for athletics, especially English football. By his final year at Uppingham (1876) he was Captain of the football team. (Anon, 1913)

Bucknall spent the next two years at the London offices of Henry Bucknall and Sons learning the financial and administrative aspects of the cork industry. In 1878 he relocated to Spain and Portugal to learn the practical aspects of the cork industry and also to learn Spanish and Portugal. Historically Spain and Portugal were the most important countries for cork production (and remain so today). The cork oak tree (*Quercus suber*), whose spongy, lightweight outer bark would be transformed into bottle corks, floats for life jackets and even linoleum, grew in the cool, mountainous areas of both countries on plantations called “estates.” The bark was stripped from the trees every nine or ten years, without harm to the tree (in fact, some of the cork oaks on the plantations lived to be more than one hundred and fifty years old, producing roughly half a ton of oak during their lifetimes.) After the bark was harvested, the outer layer of bark (cork) was separated from the inner layer, then dried and bundled into bales. In addition to raw cork sheets (usually called “corkwood” in the trade), finished bottle corks and other fabricated cork items (like fishing floats, panels for life jackets, and heel inserts for shoes), cork dust (ground cork, then an important component of much of the linoleum produced in the United States and Europe) and even “cork black” (soot derived from burning cork, and used as a pigment in printer’s ink) were the primary items of commerce in the cork trade. [A good study of the cork industry can be found in Parsons, 1962. For a popularized account of the Portuguese cork industry see the chapter entitled “Portugal and Its Cork Forests” in Allen, 1913; many of the photographs are courtesy of the Armstrong Cork Co., with which Bucknall was affiliated.]

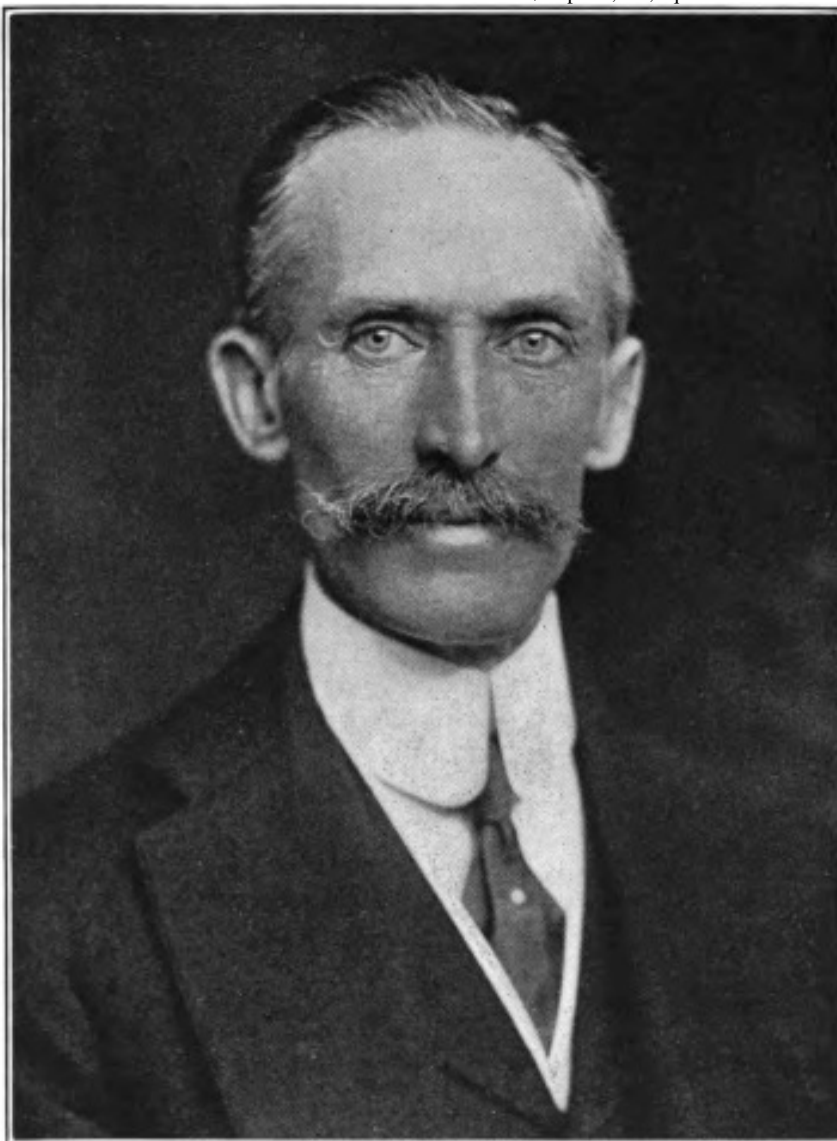
An inkling of the scale of the Bucknall family’s cork operations in Portugal is provided by an 1883 news snippet in the New York Times, noting that the Bucknall cork factory in Lisbon had burned with a loss of \$500,000. (NY Times, 1883)

Armed with a comprehensive knowledge of the cork trade, Bucknall set out for the United States in 1882 in order to establish his own cork importing firm. He booked passage from Lisbon, Portugal, and sailed aboard the SS *Douro*, a 2,800 gross ton steel hulled passenger steamer, on March 31st. Bucknall almost never reached the New World. Only a day out of port, while still in the Bay of Biscay off Cape Finisterre, the *Douro* struck the SS *Yrurac Bat*. Within twenty minutes the *Douro* sank. Fourteen of her crewmembers drowned, along with 6 passengers. The *Yrurac Bat* sank almost as quickly,

drowning her Captain and twenty nine of her crew and passengers. Luckily, the Wilson Line’s steamer *Hidalgo* was close by, and rescued many of the survivors of both vessels – including Bucknall. He did not reach New York City until May, 1882.

In October 1882, Bucknall partnered with George Gudewill, a German immigrant who appears to have invested in a wide array of industries in the US and Canada, to form the firm of Gudewill and Bucknall, with offices at 125 Water Street. (Anon., 1913; Trow, 1890) The firm did not engage in any manufacturing, but merely served as importers and exporters. Presumably, most of the products and even the raw materials in which they dealt were either produced by Henry Bucknall & Sons or at least came from the cork estates which they controlled. The firm submitted testimony to the Senate Finance Committee in 1894 as one of many industries engaged in using materials that could be impacted by changes in federal tariffs. The testimony provides a glimpse into the company’s operations:

We import cork bark, manufactured corks, cork bark cut into squares or cubes, and cork waste. Values vary greatly according to quality; cork bark is worth from \$20 to \$500 per ton; manufactured corks from 40 cents to \$20 per 1,000; squares are also



Henry W J Bucknall



It is impossible to give retail and wholesale prices for the many grades and qualities at point of production or here. Prices have varied little in 1884, 1890, and 1892. Just now prices here, on an average, are probably 10 per cent cheaper than from 1884 to 1892. Some may be 20 per cent, some 5 per cent, etc.

Goods are sold mostly on three months' time. We are purchasers. No commission is paid us, as we handle our own goods. Five per cent is the rate of interest.

Our imports have been about as follows: 1890, \$421,000; 1891, \$476,000; 1892, \$412,000; 1893, \$395,000.

We compete with domestic production by importing exactly what our customers want, and where home manufacturers have difficulty in producing the goods as cheaply as we can import them. Freights vary every year and every month of the year. If much wheat or other products go to Portugal, return freights are lower, and visa versa. On an average freights have not varied of any account the last ten years. (Anon, 1895)

Bucknall soon took in Henry George Scholtz as a partner in the firm. Like Bucknall, Scholtz had been born in Portugal. His parents were German and Portuguese, and it is likely

equally variable; cork waste is worth from \$20 to \$30 per ton. Cork bark is free of duty; manufactured corks pay 15 cents per pound; squares or cubes 10 cents per pound, and cork waste 10 per cent ad valorem. The corks we import correspond with corks manufactured here. In 1890 the following changes were made in the tariff: Corks, 15 cents per pound; squares, 10 cents per pound, and cork waste, 10 per cent ad valorem, while cork wood remained free. The cost of goods imported by us has not increased or decreased of any account since 1890.

To make the United States an exporting country would require free ships, to make freights cheaper. Our articles, corks and cork-wood, are bulky, and can not stand two freights. Exports from here will never be large, on account of the above stated reason — "too bulky to stand two freights."

About 20 to 30 per cent of the corks used are imported into this country. The balance are manufactured here, and fair wages are paid. At reduced wages and at the present rate of duty possibly more would be manufactured in the United States.

Our goods have never been exported to the countries they were imported from, except perhaps trifling specialties. They probably never will be exported to the countries they come from.

When we import goods and then export them we add to the price we paid freight expenses and our commission.

# PEERLESS BRAND

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## CORKS

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**Manufactured expressly for the  
Finest Prescription Trade.**

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### THE J. H. PADDOCK CO.,

**Bush Terminal, - Brooklyn, N. Y.**

**ARMSTRONG CORK COMPANY, 84 North Street, Boston. (Principal office Pittsburg, Pa.)**

**Incorporated under laws of Pennsylvania. Annual meeting in February. Capital stock authorized, \$2,500,000, issued, \$2,496,700. President, T. M. Armstrong; Treasurer, Wm. H. Pfahl; Secretary, W. H. Pasil; Directors: the above, and C. D. Armstrong, W. E. Evans, T. A. Standish (all of Pittsburg), I. T. Truslow (New York), B. G. Dodge (Lancaster, Pa.), L. L. Gilbert (St. Louis), F. W. Douglas, E. W. M. Cready (both of Chicago), H. W. J. Bucknall (New York), Geo. Gudewell (Germany).**

that they were involved in the cork industry. Educated in Germany and England, Scholtz was initially placed in charge of the Portuguese operations of Gudewill and Bucknall. After several years he was brought to New York City and promoted to a partnership. Soon thereafter the firm's name was changed to Bucknall, Scholtz & Co. By 1900 (possibly earlier) they had relocated their offices to 193 Water Street. (Anon, 1900; Trow, 1909) The partnership between Bucknall and Scholtz continued until both retired from the company in 1925.

In addition to his own firm, which concentrated exclusively on importing cork and cork products, Bucknall was allied with several cork manufacturers in the United States. He served as Vice President and Director of the Paddock Cork Co, (Anon., 1900). At the company's factory at 1209-1215 DeKalb Avenue, Brooklyn, they produced three grades of corks for bottles for the pharmaceutical trade: "The best that can be produced to suit the most fastidious will be found in the "Gold Label" brand; a selection of a carefully chosen prescription cork in the "Daisy" brand; and an excellent value of an "all around" cork for ordinary purposes in the "Blue Star" brand. Druggists who use them will find that they will save time, trouble, and money." (Anon. 1908)

They also offered other cork products, advertising cork boards for classroom use. They disposed of their cork scraps to the ice industry to use as insulation for ice houses.

Perhaps the most important of all of Bucknall's manufacturing affiliations was with the Armstrong Cork Company. The company had humble beginnings in Pittsburg, PA. In 1860, Thomas Morton Armstrong opened a one room shop in which bottle corks were hand carved from raw cork. In 1891, the company was incorporated as Armstrong Bro. and Company, which changed its name to Armstrong Cork Co. in 1894. Both Bucknall and Gudewell served on the Board of Directors of Armstrong Cork, and later were joined by Scholtz; Bucknall would eventually serve as Vice President of the company. With capitol stock of \$2,500,000, Armstrong Cork was one of the largest cork manufacturing companies in the United States.

The Armstrong Cork Co. manufactured just about every cork-based product known to the trade. Their most successful line, however, was linoleum.

Linoleum had been developed between 1855 and 1860 by Frederick Walton, an English inventor. Walton observed that linseed oil oxidized over time to form a flexible skin. Over a period of time he created a process which sped up the process of oxidation. The linseed oil was boiled, mixed with a chemi-

cal catalyst, and allowed to slowly flow over long sheets of cotton cloth hung vertically in a tall, heated tower. The linseed oil quickly oxidized into a new compound called linoxyn and solidified on the cloth. More linseed oil was cycled through daily and allowed to oxidize; over six to eight weeks a thick coating of linoxyn formed, which was cut down and ground up. The linoxyn was then mixed with a filler – usually either cork dust or saw dust. (The entire process was fraught with danger... cork dust, when suspended in air, could cause an explosion, and linseed oil was prone to spontaneously combust, more so when oxidized.) The filler helped to reduce the propensity of the linoxyn to become tacky as well as acting as an inexpensive filler to help "bulk up" the linoleum sheets. Cork based linoleum was more flexible than sawdust based, and had the added advantage of dampening sound more than sawdust linoleum. Its main drawback was its dark color. Efforts to bleach the color out of cork dust failed; any chemical powerful enough to decolorize the brown hue of the cork ended up damaging the cork to the point of making it useless as a filler. Cork linoleum was only available in brown, red or green, and while other colors could be printed on it, they print layer tended not to wear well. (McGowen, 1896)

On Wednesday, 21 November 1894, Henry W J Bucknall married Clara Legg, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. George Legg, at the Church of the Divine Paternity (NY Times, 1894b). It was a Universalist church in Manhattan whose congregation included P T Barnum and Horace Greeley (it is today known as the Fourth Universalist Society of New York). Together they would have three sons: G Stafford, Bertram C, and H Lloyd F Bucknall.

At about the same time, Bucknall purchased an estate in the Red Spring Colony, located in the north-west part of Glen Cove (then part of the town of Oyster Bay in Queens County on Long Island, but within a short time it became part of the newly formed Nassau County, and finally declaring independence of Oyster Bay in 1918). He renamed the estate "Leahead." It is possible that "Leahead" derived its name from a 17<sup>th</sup> Century estate called "Lea Head Manor". Raven (2004) states that this estate is south of the small town of Madeley in Staffordshire, and was "built in 1672 for William Bucknall." The English house derived its name from the fact that "the River Lea rises close to the house from a reed fringed lake."

The 5 acre estate was on a high bluff which overlooked Long Island Sound. At present, the author has been unable to determine the architect. The construction date of the house has

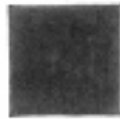




690



341



11



3450

## For That Home You're Planning

FOUR different kinds of Armstrong's Linoleum were used in the five rooms shown in this first-floor view of a newly-built house: Parquetry Inlaid (Pattern No. 690) in the living room and dining room; plain brown linoleum for the hall; a red tile inlaid (Pattern No. 341) for the enclosed porch; and a blue-and-white inlaid (Pattern No. 3450) for the kitchen. Gray Jaspé linoleum (a two-tone moiré effect) was laid in the second-floor sleeping rooms and a blue-and-white tile pattern in the bathroom.

These linoleum floors were installed at the time the house was being built, at an appreciable saving over the cost of other floors, and with very distinct practical and artistic advantages. The linoleum for each room was carefully selected so that walls, woodwork and floors, as well as draperies and furnishings, are in harmonious relation to one another as integral parts of the decorator's well-planned color scheme.

In every room the linoleum was installed in accordance with the architect's specifications. First, a

base of No. 2 tongued and grooved pine flooring was laid. On this, the linoleum was pasted down firmly over a layer of builder's deadening felt. All the seams and edges were neatly fitted and then sealed with a waterproof cement. Each floor was waxed as soon as laid, a paste wax being rubbed thoroughly into the surface. Because the work was done by a man who knew his business, these floors will retain their attractiveness for years. The colors of the inlaid linoleum will never change; they run clear through to the hurlap back. Soft, resilient underfoot, easily cleaned and kept clean, these linoleum floors will daily contribute to the comfort and well-being of all who live in this home.

For the house you are planning there are designs and colorings in Armstrong's Linoleum to suit your individual conception of modern home interiors. The Armstrong Bureau of Interior Decoration will be pleased to offer suggestions and to send you a generous assortment of samples, upon your request. There is no fee for this service, nor implied obligation. Make use of it.

Armstrong Cork Co., Linoleum Dept., Lancaster, Pa.

# Armstrong's Linoleum

For Every Room **(A)** in the House



been variously given as 1896 (per Nassau County tax records) or 1894 (per NY Times, 1942) and 1891 (per McKay et alia, 1997). [The author has not ruled out the possibility that the estate pre-existed Bucknall's ownership; the early history of Leahead requires additional research.]

At its height, the Bucknall estate consisted of three main structures: the main house, a carriage house/automobile garage, and a gate house. Greenhouses and agricultural outbuildings (chicken coops, barns, etc) present on some estates have not been documented at Leahead.

While the author has not been able to find any architectural

description of the main mansion, it is possible to piece together some descriptive material of the exterior and interior of the mansion using tax assessment data gathered by Nassau County in 1938. It should be remembered that this data was collected roughly forty years after the house was constructed, and the degree to which the structure was modified during that period is unknown. Comparison of a photo of the northern façade of the house dating from circa 1907 and a measured sketch of the footprint of the house made 5 July 1938 does not indicate any radical change in that portion of the building's exterior.

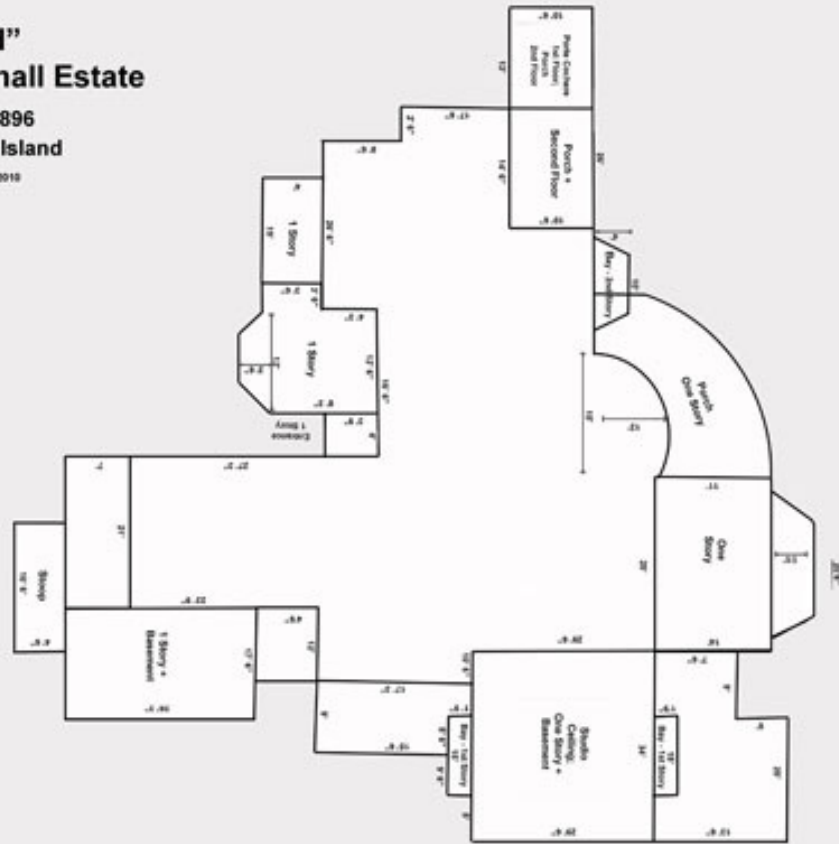


Leahead as it appeared circa 1931. This image was modified from an 1931 Sanborn Atlas map of Glen Cove; the manuscript notations are con-emporary field observations made by the City of Glen Cove, apparently related to property value assessment. The map shows the main house ("A"), the garage ("B") and the Gate House ("C")

**"Leahead"  
Henry W. J. Bucknall Estate**

Constructed 1896  
Glen Cove, Long Island

Daniel E Russell June 2010



**The Main House**

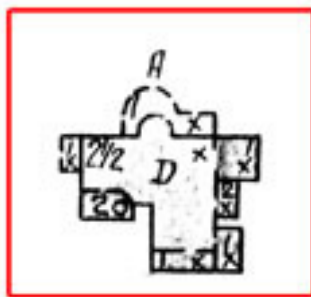
The foundation of Leahead was brick. On the first floor, the façade was brick veneer. The façade on the second and third floor was stucco on frame, with minor amounts of wood shingle siding.

The building was three stories tall, predominantly capped with a gable roof (except for one area which may have served as a terrace). In 1938, the roof was covered with asphalt roofing shingles; it is possible that the original foof was wooden shingles.

The building had a turret that rose the entire height of the structure on the northern side. On the first floor, the turret was bordered by a large wrap-around porch.

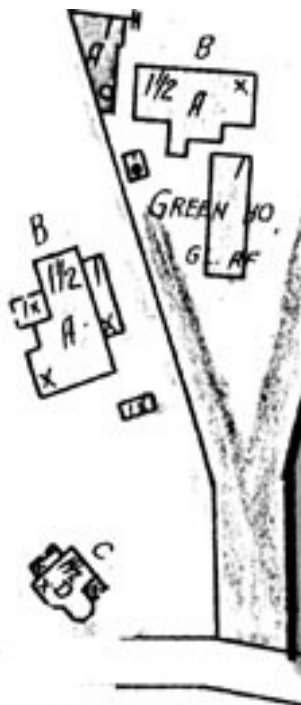
The **Reception Hall** had oak paneled walls. The **Living Room** had pine paneled walls and parquet floors. The **Dining Room** had a parquet floor, oak paneled walls, and a studio ceiling. The **Billiard Room** had a paneled ceiling and oak base moulding, probably with enameled plaster. The **Master Bath** was fitted with gold plated fixtures and hand carved trim.

At some point between circa 1938 and 1990, the building was radically altered by the removal of the whole of the third story.

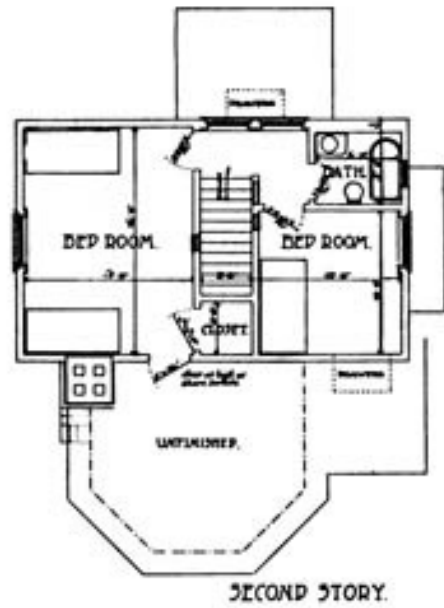
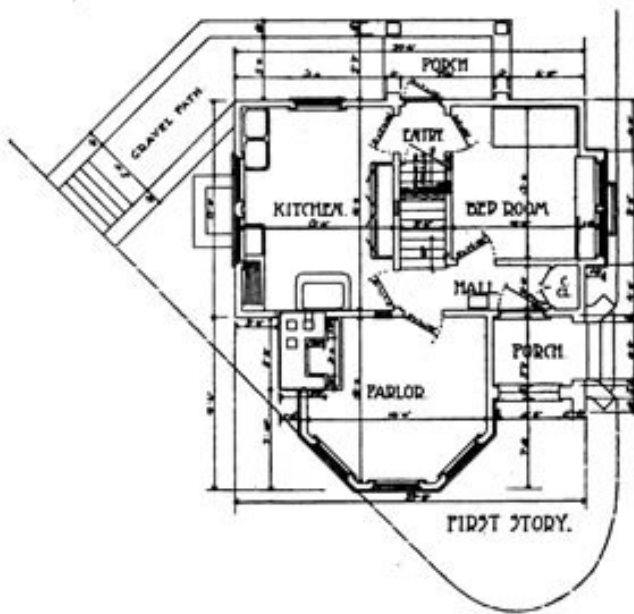


H. W. J. BUCKNALL

5 Ac.



Detail of the 1931 Sanborn Atlas plate showing the main house at Leahead.



The Gate House at Leahead as it appeared circa 1910

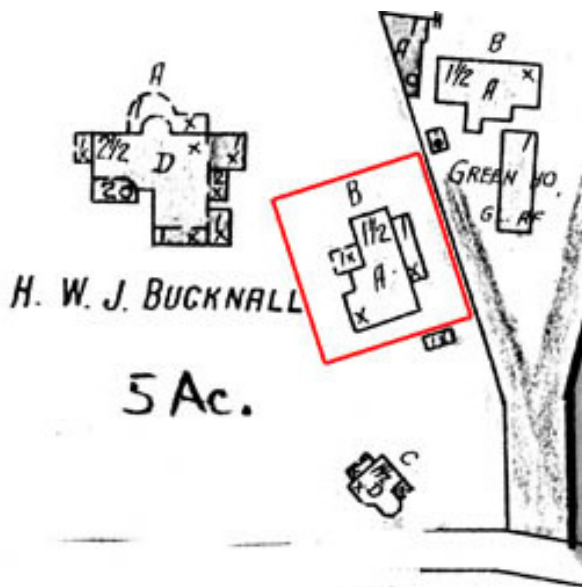


### The Gate House

The Gate House for the estate was located southeast of the main mansion, and north of and adjacent to Cedar Lane.

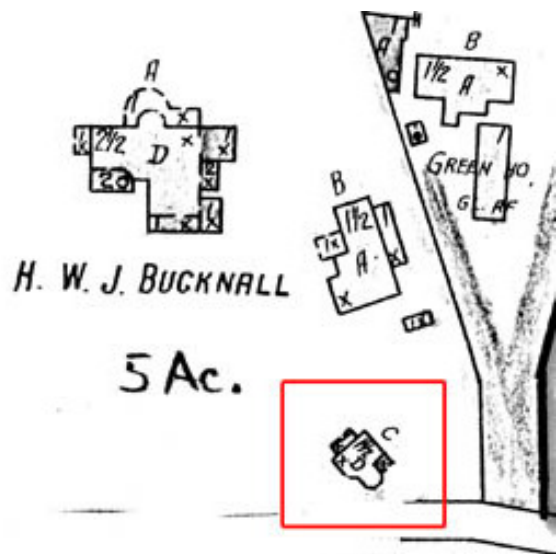
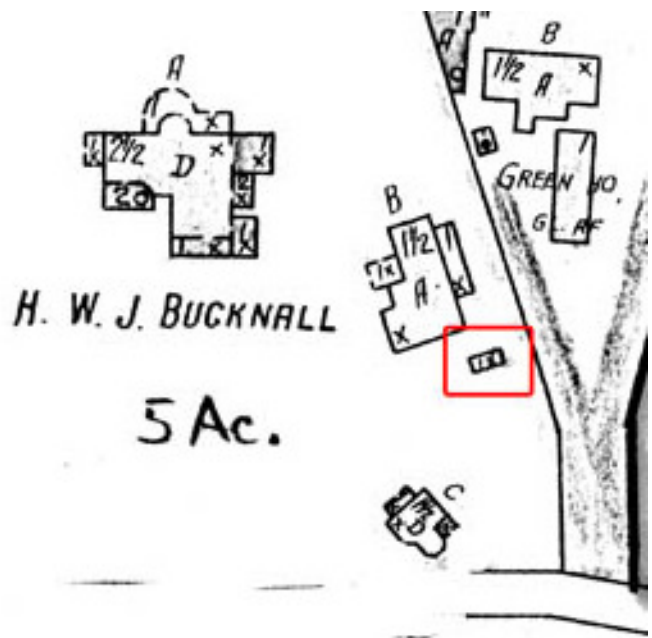
The architect is listed as "A S Bell," (probably Algernon S Bell, a New York City architect who performed a few commissions on Long Island's "Gold Coast," including the R P R Nielsen estate in Westbury. See Mackay et alia, 1997). The building was Tudor in style, containing a parlor, kitchen, and three bedrooms

Based upon examination of aerial reconnaissance photographs, the Gate House is still extant. That portion of the estate on which the Gate House is located was subdivided and is now Section 31, Block 63, Lot 31.



### Unidentified Structure

One unidentified structure appears on the 1931 Sanborn Atlas plate. It is a small, elongated one storey wooden structure. It is possible that the structure is a gardening or potting shed.



### The Garage

That portion of the estate on which the garage was originally located has subsequently been subdivided and is now Section 31, Block 64, Lot 33. Comparison of the footprint of the garage shown on the 1931 Sanborn map of Glen Cove and current aerial reconnaissance photos of the site indicate that either the garage has been demolished or has been heavily modified. Field investigation will be required to determine that status of this structure. The Nassau County Assessor's office gives a construction date of 1900 for the building, but the original 1938 assessment cards merely have a question mark for year in which it was built. Considerable additional research is needed on this structure

Henry Bucknall was active in several clubs and organizations during his lifetime. As a member of the Larchmont Yacht Club, Bucknall was active in local yachting circles. He frequently raced his 40 foot cutter, the *Minerva*, in local regattas. The *Minerva* was designed in the fall of 1888 by the famous



yacht architect William Fife Jr. of Fairlie, Scotland, for Charles H Tweed, a prominent New York City attorney. (NY Times, 1890a). Tweed raced her with great success, but in early 1890 sold the boat to Charles Carroll, son of Maryland governor John Lee Carroll (NY Times, 1890b). Bucknall finally purchased the *Minerva* from Theodore Zerega in late 1893 or early 1894. Lewis Francis Herreshoff, son of the famous American yacht designer Nathanael Herreshoff, pronounced the *Minerva* “the prettiest thing I had ever seen, and when I say ‘pretty’ I mean it; and I still think so.” The New York Times commented that “although this boat is six years old she can hold her own with any in the forty foot class.” (NY Times, 1894a) Under his ownership the *Minerva*’s continued to command respect on the racing circuit. Bucknall served as both Rear Commodore and Vice Commodore of the Larchmont Yacht Club in the mid-1890s.

He was a member of the Downtown Club, New York Yacht Club, and the Racquet and Tennis Club. One of the several charitable organizations which Bucknall was closely identified was St George’s Society of New York, one of the oldest charities in New York City. Organized in 1770 by expatriate Englishmen in Manhattan, St George’s Society was formed to provide “advice and relief” to Englishmen in need. Like most men’s societies, it also provided its members a place (and reason) to gather together in a spirit of fellowship. He served variously as Treasurer, Chairman of the Executive Committee, and two separate stints as Vice President before finally being elected the organization’s 37<sup>th</sup> President in 1913. He was also on the Board of Directs of St Luke’s Hospital (today St Luke’s – Roosevelt Hospital).

Clara Bucknall was also active in charity and civic work in Glen Cove. She was a member of the Board of Directors for the Lincoln House, an organization founded for the “promotion of the social, physical and intellectual welfare” of the African-American residents of Glen Cove; the Orchard House, a similar organization aimed at Italian immigrants, which taught home economics, English, and the citizenship skills that would be needed to pass the Naturalization exams of that era. She was also on the board of the Glen Cove Neighborhood Association, one of the more active civic organizations in Glen Cove, and President of the Visiting Nurses Association, an organization which was of vital importance in the years before Glen Cove had its own hospital. SXhe died suddenly on 15 June, 1934 while visiting her two youngest sons at Christow, in Devon, England. (NY Times, 1934) (It is possible that Christow was the site of another Bucknall family estate, as Bertram C and H Lloyd F Bucknall were both residing there in 1934 and 1943.)

In 1938, Bucknall purchased a Skinner Aeolian pipe organ valued at \$61,000 for St Paul’s Episcopal Church in Glen Cove. The organ had originally been installed in “Paterno Castle.” Constructed on the edge of the Hudson River in 1905 for doctor-turned-real estate tycoon Charles V Paterno, the mansion was a bumptious architectural fantasy, a travesty in the form of Hollywood vision of a medieval castle. The mansion was being razed (after being razed) to make way for an apartment building... one of the few examples in which the demolition of a mansion was a public service. Bucknall wished to present the organ – which had 3,097 pipes – to the church in memory of his wife. (NY Times, 1938b – the article contains a typographical error in which it refers to the estate as “Leadhead” rather than “Leahead”). The existing church building, constructed in the 1890’s, had been condemned as structurally unsafe by the City of Glen Cove a few months previous to the announcement of Bucknall’s donation and a new \$200,000 brick structure was being planned to replace it (NY Times, 1938a). The organ was placed in one of the church’s crypts temporarily until the new church was ready to receive it.

Henry W J Bucknall died on 24 June 1942 at Leahead. He was 84 years old. At the time, his son G Stafford Bucknall was residing in Glen Cove. G Stafford Bucknall’s name appears on the tax assessment records after his father’s death, but this may indicate he was serving as contact/agent for his father’s estate. However, his involvement in Leahead was short lived, as he died only eight months after his father.

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