

Stillington Hall

Massachusetts USA

Caroline Croft (born 1858 in Bunbury, Nantwich, Cheshire) was the grand-daughter of Admiral William Croft (1782-1872). She married Charles Buswell (born 1844) in 1881 and they had three children. One of these, **Henry Leslie F. Buswell** (b. 8.12.1888 in Richmond, Surrey) was first an actor but also an engineer. He first went to America in 1914 and worked for John Hays Hammond Jr., the principal developer of remote control via radio waves. He travelled to and from England on a number of occasions. In 1928 he married Mary Armstrong Robinson daughter of William Henry Robinson, Treasurer of J.H.Heinz and Co. of Pittsburgh.
(see family tree at the end)



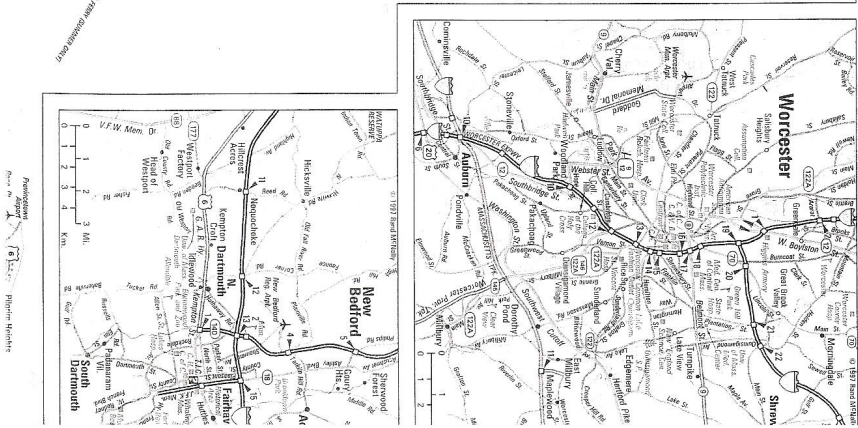
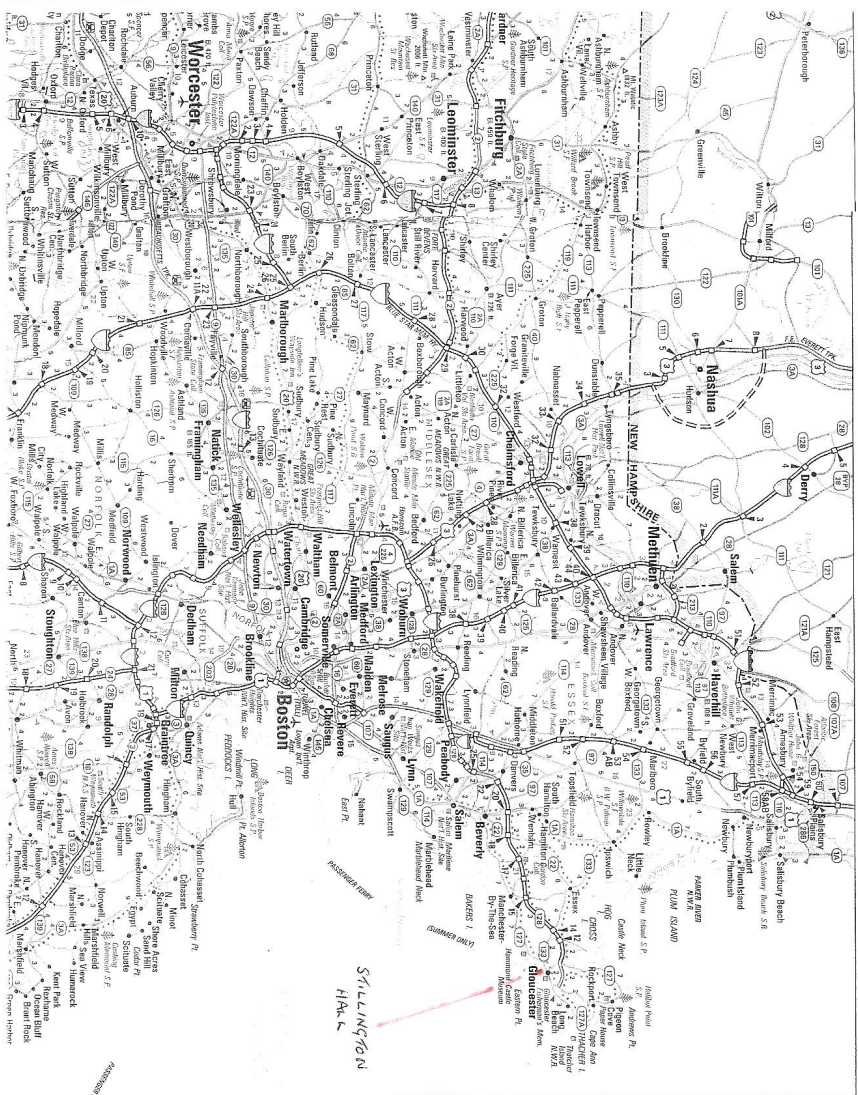
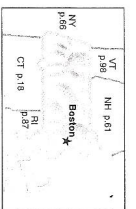
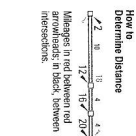
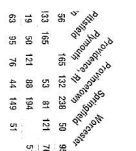
In the early 1920's he travelled back to England and visited the village of Stillington where his ancestors were Lords of the Manor. There he bought a large wooden derelict house that stood upon the eastern end of the village green. Both the Green and house were part of the Croft Estate. The house was called Cromwell House. This name was etched on a stone over the door with 1630 also carved on it. He had the house dismantled and taken to the Eastern Point of Gloucester, Massachusetts. An old photograph shows this timber framed house on the Eastern edge of the village Green in Stillington, Yorkshire.



Once it had arrived in Massachusetts he incorporated it into the new Stillington Hall that he was having built on land extending to 33 acres. This he had bought in 1923 just behind property owned by Hammond. He had a private lake, built to his design, amidst woodland with a view over Gloucester Harbour, Eastern point and the Atlantic. The new Hall was built as a Tudor – style house and it also incorporated the timbers of a number of very old New England houses. As a result it is not possible to tell which part of the new house came from Yorkshire. He was assisted by the collector and interior designer Henry Davis Sleeper. The building was finished in 1925.









No expense was spared on the property. The shingle roof was made rise and fall to complement the waves of the nearby ocean.



Leaded bottle glass windows were placed all around the building.

Inside were many panelled rooms, the woodwork of which was from the previously mentioned houses. Large displays of pewter, glass, pottery and furniture from the 1600's and later were collected from both England and America and displayed on shelves and cupboards.



The rooms were filled with valuable antique furniture and some of the walls were covered with linen wallpaper.

Being an actor and now very rich he built a theatre. This is a vaulted hall with a stage at one end, and seating capacity for 170 people. His own friends, amongst whom were many well known actors, formed a troupe called the Stillington Players. But in addition the American Opera Company and the Boston Symphony Orchestra played there. Note the stained glass window inserted in the far wall. This was purchased from an old church.



There was a Steinway piano placed near the stage which Jillian was allowed to play.



In 1964 on the death of Lesley the property passed to his son Peter who looked after it until his death in 1996.

Peter did not have any children, despite being married four times, he was buried in the grounds next to his mother.





The house was then bought by John Cottrell of California who, like Buswell and his family enjoys it as a retreat during the summer months. John has preserved the property largely as he found it, replacing what items had been sold in the 1980's with similar articles. Where he has made additions these have been tastefully done and it is difficult to tell what and where these are.





Jillian and I visited this house in October 2008 at the invitation of John Cottrell.
It was a great experience.

Grahame Richardson
31st October 2008

Some details for this article were obtained from the Late Summer 2005 Edition of Antiques & Fine Art. Vol 6 Issue 3. That article in turn sourced information from Joseph E. Garland's book: North Shore: a Social History of Summers Among the Noteworthy, Fashionable, Rich, Eccentric, and Ordinary on Boston's Gold Coast, 1823- 1929, (Commonwealth Editions, 1998(and "Stillington Hall" Still occupied by Buswell Family" by Cory Bunton in "North Shore Homes" magazine (September ,1 1998).