

Abeyton Lodge

The Pocantico Center



ESTABLISHED 1927 | POCANTICO HILLS, NY



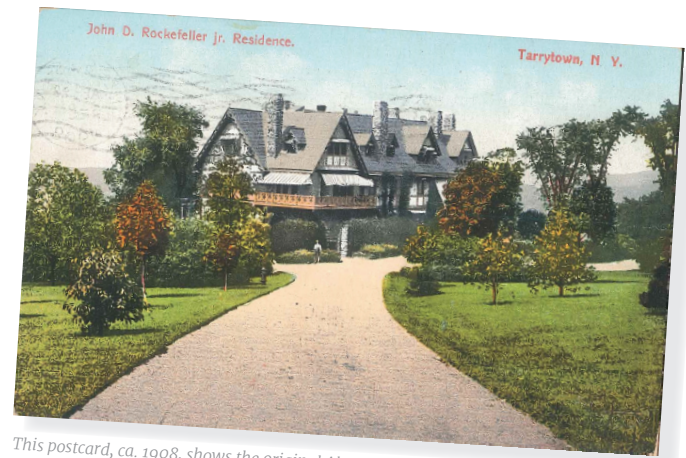
Rockefeller
Brothers Fund

Philanthropy for an Interdependent World

Abeyton Lodge

Abeyton Lodge, formerly known as the Playhouse, is one of five primary buildings that make up The Pocantico Center. It provides meeting and rehearsal space to support conferences, artist residencies, presentations, and other public programs that reflect the philanthropic interests of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

When it became part of The Pocantico Center in 2018, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund elected to rename the building Abeyton Lodge after the childhood home of the Fund's founders. This new name honors the spirit of togetherness and innovative, cooperative philanthropy that was nurtured in the family's home and reflects the nature of the building's use as a place of learning, collaboration, and growth.



This postcard, ca. 1908, shows the original Abeyton Lodge occupied by the family of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., from 1901-37.

What's in a Name?

Abeyton Lodge was the name given to the first home of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. Situated just downhill from Kykuit, the residence of John D. Rockefeller and Laura Spelman Rockefeller, it was a wedding gift to the younger Rockefeller from his father in 1901. Over the next several decades, the “large, rambling wooden structure, filled with oak paneling and floors that gave it a warm and comfortable feeling,” as David Rockefeller recalled it in his *Memoirs*, welcomed the family's daughter, Abby, and five sons: John 3rd, Nelson, Laurance, Winthrop, and David.

The family lived in this home until 1937, when John and Abby moved up the hill to Kykuit after the death of John D. Rockefeller. The house sat mostly empty for nearly a decade, but its large and intricate structure required significant upkeep. The children had homes of their own by this time, and it soon became clear that none would return to occupy their childhood dwelling. As a result, the original Abeyton Lodge was demolished in 1946.

The name Abeyton Lodge continues to carry great significance to the Rockefellers as a symbol of family origins and unity. In 1987, members of the fourth and fifth generations established a not-for-profit corporation to manage family social affairs and gatherings under the same name. Abeyton Lodge, Inc., is a private entity, independent from and without interest in the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, The Pocantico Center, or Abeyton Lodge today.



The Rockefeller Playhouse, now known as Abeyton Lodge, ca. 1938. PHOTO BY WILLIAM T. SNYDER, COURTESY OF THE ROCKEFELLER ARCHIVE CENTER.

Art & Architecture

In 1924, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., asked New York architect Duncan Candler to prepare plans for a “playhouse,” similar in style to his family’s Abeyton Lodge home, where they could relax and entertain outside of the public eye. Completed in 1927, this Tudor-inspired structure has been preserved much as the family kept it throughout the 20th century.

The main entrance opens to a stone-floored lobby showcasing portraits of Laura Spelman Rockefeller by James Shannon and of John D. Rockefeller by Joszi Arpád Koppay. In the large, oak-paneled living room that follows, carved into the paneling on the east wall is a “J” for John; on the west, an “A” for Abby. The first initials of their six children are etched into the plaster ceiling around a chandelier. Portraits of all eight family members adorn the walls. Surrounding the fireplaces are French limestone sculptures from a collection of medieval and early renaissance objects acquired by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., from George Grey Barnard in 1916.

In an adjacent card room is a set of chairs featuring needlepoint by Abby Aldrich Rockefeller and dozens of English coaching prints. Also on this floor are two bowling alleys, a small dining room, a service kitchen, and a stone porch accented by 15th-century northern Italian sculpture. The wide oak plank floors throughout are covered with striking rugs, many of which were gifts to Mr. and Mrs. David Rockefeller from King Hassan II of Morocco.

One of the most spectacular features of the house, the room housing the indoor pool is lined with patterned wall, column, and floor tiles and accented by potted tropical plants and palms. Many of the tiles and pots are Mexican Talavera. (The pool

The card room features chairs embroidered by Abby Aldrich Rockefeller and dozens of English coaching prints. PHOTO COURTESY OF BOB SNYDER.



The room housing the indoor pool, since decked over, is lined with striking Mexican Talavera pots and tiles. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION.

has been decked over to create an elegant meeting and event space.) Hanging from the barrel-vaulted ceiling above are three distinctive tin chandeliers. Matching fixtures hang from the lower arched ceiling that runs along the north side to a gymnasium lined for both basketball and handball.

An indoor tennis court was added on the east side of the building in 1938. On special occasions, it would be transformed with the addition of carpeting, drapes, flowers, and plants. Enhanced by existing skylights, this created the effect of a magnificent arboretum. The adjoining gallery features a grand fireplace and other architectural elements by the Gilded Age firm George A. Schastey & Co., saved from the home of John D. Rockefeller at 4 West 54th Street in New York, which he had purchased fully furnished from Arabella Worsham (Huntington) in 1884.

Outside, a croquet court surrounded by brick walks faces the living room, and to the east, two tennis courts are flanked by a vine-covered arbor. In the summer of 1955, Nelson Rockefeller commissioned Wallace Harrison of the firm of Harrison & Abramowitz to design the outdoor swimming pool, which is lined by six double cabanas, an outdoor kitchen, and an ice cream parlor.

Abeyton Lodge Today

Now known as Abeyton Lodge, the Playhouse was transferred to the ownership of the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 2018 to be operated by The Pocantico Center of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. This generous bequest from David Rockefeller, who passed away in March 2017, ensures that the historic fabric of this important building will be preserved and used in service of the Fund's philanthropic activities.

For decades, this building has served as the center of Rockefeller family activities. Brothers John 3rd, Nelson, Laurance, Winthrop, and David often convened meetings here after Sunday dinners and, at one such meeting in 1940, concluded that a joint pool of funds would have more impact than any one of their individual philanthropic efforts, thus establishing the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

Abeyton Lodge will carry on this great legacy. For decades, the Rockefeller family has hosted semi-annual meetings at the house in June and December. More than 270 members of the Rockefeller family today will continue to gather at Abeyton Lodge twice annually under a lease with the National Trust based on an independent appraisal of fair market value.



John 3rd, Laurance, Abby Mauzé, Nelson, and David Rockefeller host a family meeting in the Abeyton Lodge living room, ca. 1973. On the rear wall are portraits of Nelson and Abby Aldrich Rockefeller.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ROCKEFELLER ARCHIVE CENTER.

The Pocantico Center



Jeremy McQueen's Black Iris Project performs in front of Kykuit as part of the Pocantico Arts Collaborative performance series, 2017. PHOTO BY FRED CHARLES.

The Pocantico Center hosts philanthropic and public programs of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund that have local, national, and global impact. Since 1994, Pocantico has hosted more than a thousand conferences, meetings, and retreats for nonprofit and public sector initiatives. The Center's multidisciplinary artist residencies host dozens of dancers, musicians, playwrights, poets, and visual artists each year. The Center also serves as a community resource and offers public access through tours, lectures, performances, and other cultural events.

The Pocantico Center includes Kykuit, Abeyton Lodge, the Marcel Breuer House, the Coach Barn, the Orangerie, several guest houses, and the encircling gardens and landscapes. Located 20 miles north of Manhattan in the Pocantico Historic Area, it is managed by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund as part of an agreement with the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

The Rockefeller Brothers Fund advances social change that contributes to a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world. Its grantmaking is organized around three themes: Democratic Practice, Peacebuilding, and Sustainable Development. Although the Fund pursues its three program interests in a variety of geographic contexts, it has also identified “pivotal places” on which to concentrate cross-programmatic attention: China and the Western Balkans. The Fund’s Charles E. Culpeper Arts & Culture program nurtures a vibrant and inclusive arts community in its home city of New York.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, a privately funded nonprofit organization, works to save America’s historic places. The Trust protects significant places representing our diverse cultural experience by taking direct action and inspiring broad public support.



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