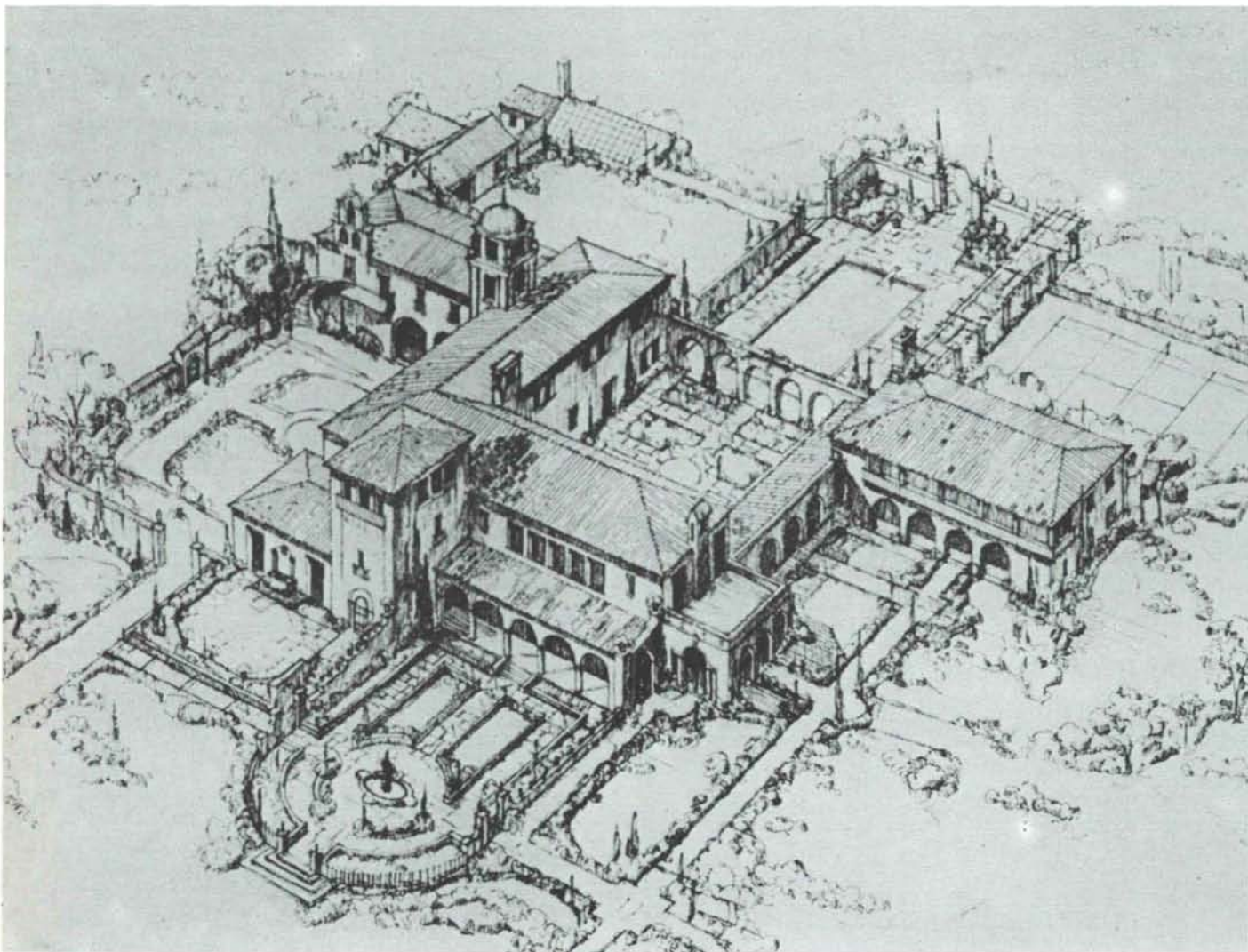


VILLA PHILMONTE:



Mansion in the Wilderness - by Stephen Zimmer

"That ranch represents an ideal of my youth... And (it) has meant a lot to my son and his pals. Now I want to make it available to other boys..." With these words, quoted in *Tulsa Daily World* on December 19, 1941, Oklahoma oilman Waite Phillips made public the gift of 127,395 acres of his Philmont Ranch near Cimarron, New Mexico to the members of the Boy Scouts of America.

At the time, the Philmont Ranch was one of the most well-developed ranch properties along the front range of the Rockies. Carved out of the Maxwell Land Grant, the ranch ran 3,000 head of commercial and registered Hereford cows and 9,000 head of Corriedale sheep. Its Thoroughbred and part-Thoroughbred mares and stallions were recognized all over the West for the quality colts they

produced. Its irrigated acres, sown in alfalfa, oats, and barley, supplied feed for its livestock, while the ranch's orchards produced thousands of boxes of apples yearly.

The ranch was also Phillips' private resort for his family and friends. The mountain backcountry comprising the western part of the ranch was linked by an elaborate network of horseback trails that provided access to four different hunting and fishing lodges.

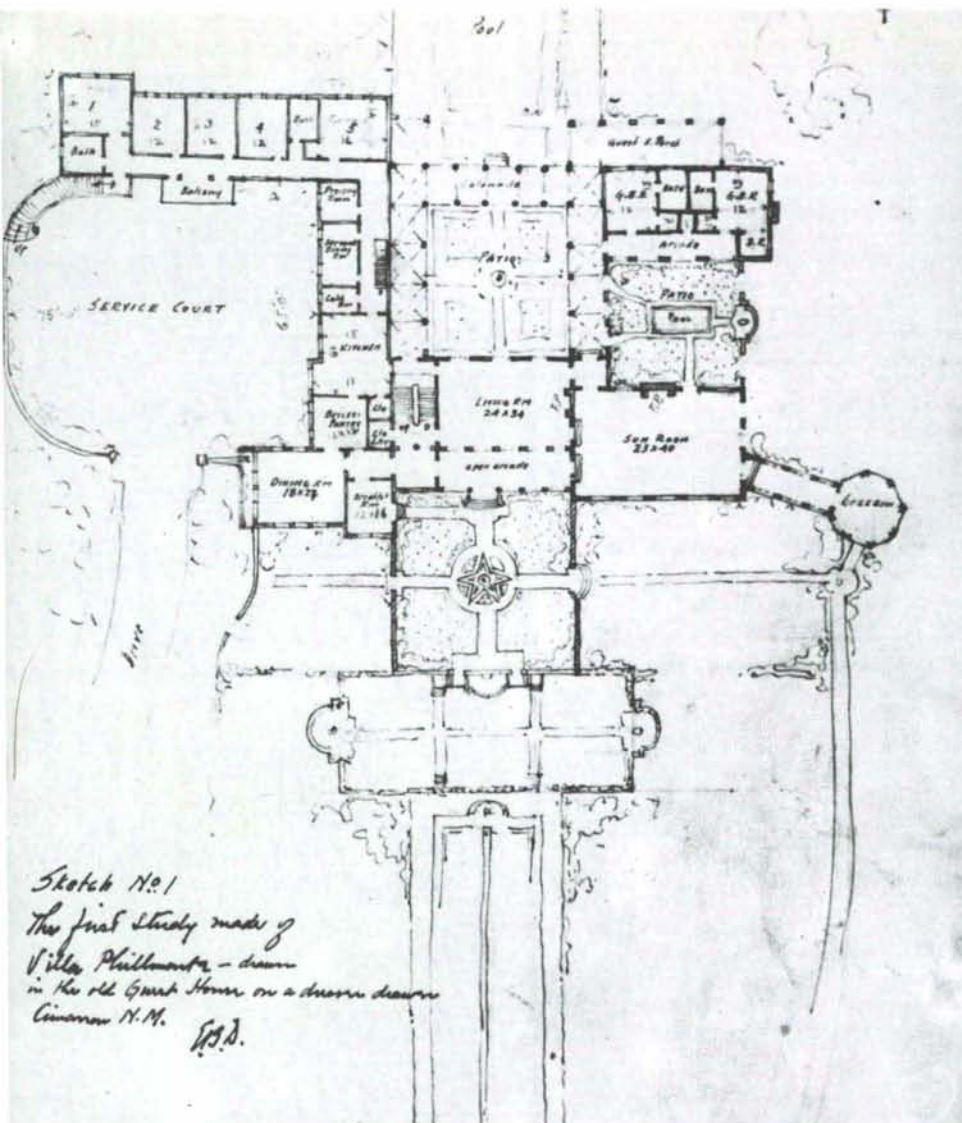
The Philmont Ranch represented a dream come true for Phillips, who was born on a small farm near Conway, Iowa on January 19, 1883. Waite and his identical twin brother Wiata, left home at age 16 for an undetermined destination in the Rocky Mountains.

For three years the Phillips twins

traveled through the northern Rockies working as laborers at various mining, timber and railroad camps. In the summer of 1902 Wiata became seriously ill from a ruptured appendix. He died in a hospital in Spokane, Washington at age nineteen.

Distraught over his brother's death, Waite returned to Iowa. With the encouragement of his older brothers, Frank and L.E., he enrolled in the business department of the Western Normal College in Shenandoah, Iowa. Upon graduation in the summer of 1903, he took a position as bookkeeper with the Hawkeye Coal Company in Knoxville where he met and

Above: Artist's rendering of the Villa. The finished structure was altered several times from this drawing.



Edward Delk's preliminary sketch of Villa Philmonte, 10/31/25

married Genevieve Elliott, the daughter of a local banker. Later he was hired as a salesman for the Rex Coal and Mining Company of Creston, Iowa.

During this period his brothers, Frank and L.E., moved to Oklahoma Territory where they invested in the developing oil business. Phillips followed them to the Oklahoma oil fields and their Bartlesville headquarters in the spring of 1906.

Phillips worked with his brothers in their oil exploration and production business until the summer of 1914. At that time the two older brothers decided to liquidate the assets of their oil enterprises in order to devote their full energies to their banking interests.

Waite followed suit by selling his minor interest in the business and purchasing an oil marketing firm headquartered in Fayetteville, Arkansas. After operating it for a year, he sold the company and

returned to the Oklahoma fields.

Establishing headquarters at Okmulgee, Oklahoma, Phillips developed a number of extensive oil producing properties with success and soon expanded his operation to include refining, transportation, and marketing facilities.

His older brothers, in liquidating their various oil assets in 1914, were forced to retain certain oil and gas leases they held on Osage Indian land. These properties proved to be so valuable after further exploration that they again entered the oil business in 1917 and established the Phillips Petroleum Company.

Waite, on the other hand, remained on his own and moved his headquarters to Tulsa in the spring of 1918. Four years later, he integrated his holdings into the Waite Phillips Company and became its president and general manager.

In the spring of 1925 Phillips sold the capital stock of the Waite Phillips Company to Blair and Company, a Wall Street investment firm, for twenty-five million dollars cash. The sale freed him to pursue his banking and real estate investments which included several ranches in the West.

From his youth, Phillips had always wanted to own a mountain cow ranch. As his oil investments grew and turned profits, he looked more and more into this kind of property.

In 1920, he bought a ranch near Denver that he called the Highland. Not pleased, however, with its recreational possibilities, he continued to search for a ranch with more mountainous acreage.

In the spring of 1922 Phillips learned of the proposed sale of the Urraca Ranch

Contractor John Long (left), unidentified man (middle), and architect Edward Delk (right) photographed during construction.





Villa Philmonte –

Clockwise from the top left: The main staircase with painted and leaded Palladian window.

Villa Philmonte as seen from the west across the broad lawns.

The Dining Room with coffered ceiling.

The Sun Room, which was originally an open-air sun deck and later enclosed and used as a sleeping porch.

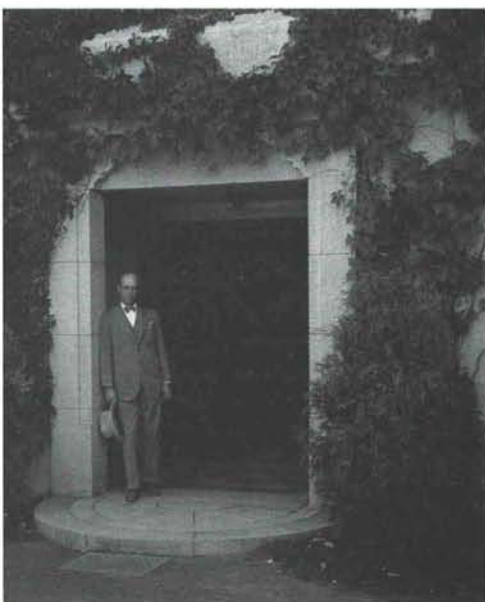
The Trophy Room as it looks today.

At right: An early photograph of Wai Phillips in the auto court entrance Villa Philmonte.

Color photography by Bob Brazell, 1988.



— as seen by Stephen Zimmer



headquartered south of Cimarron, New Mexico. He dispatched his Denver ranch manager, Gene Hayward, to Cimarron to investigate and as a result of his report, Phillips purchased almost 42,000 acres of the Urraca for more than \$150,000. Early in the spring of the next year, he acquired an additional 30,000 acres of the ranch for nearly one-quarter million dollars.

The Urraca Ranch, with its choice grazing and farming acres along the foothills and mountains of the Sangre de Cristo range, provided an excellent foundation property from which Phillips was able to expand his holdings. As contiguous property became available, including mountain land owned by the Maxwell Land Grant Company, he purchased it. By 1926 he had put almost 300,000 acres under one fence.

In recognition of his native state of Iowa, Phillips initially named the ranch the Hawkeye. But in 1925, he renamed it Philmont, a derivation of his own name and the Spanish word for mountain, "monte."

After acquiring the Urraca, Phillips immediately began developing the ranch's livestock, farming, and recreation resources. He brought to this work the same energy and managerial skill that had made him overwhelmingly successful in the oil business.

Of primary importance was a residence on the ranch for his family. After the sale of his oil business, Phillips and his wife sailed to the Mediterranean with the express purpose of gathering architectural ideas in Spain and Italy for a home at Philmont and a main residence in Tulsa.

They were joined by Edward Buehler Delk, a Kansas City architect, who had been commissioned to design the two structures. Delk (1885-1956) had studied ar-



Villa Philmonte, under construction, 1926.



Above: The Villa nearing completion, spring 1927.

Below: Villa Philmonte, ca. 1930, showing the gazebo (right) that was added in 1929 and the bell tower (left) that was later dismantled. The belfry (seen in the construction photographs) had by this time been removed.



chitecture at the University of Pennsylvania graduating with a degree in 1907. After further study at the University of London, he began practicing in Philadelphia in 1913.

His career was interrupted from 1917 to 1919 with military service in World War I. On return from being stationed in England he was hired as a consultant to the J.C. Nichols Company of Kansas City. He was assigned to master plan the company's Country Club Plaza and subsequently designed two of the development's first buildings.

In 1922 Delk again entered private practice establishing an office in Kansas City. His design interests, lay in Colonial Revival, Italian Renaissance and Spanish Mediterranean styles, all popular domestic themes of the day. In his career he was to design more than thirty landmark houses in Kansas, Oklahoma and Missouri. Waite Phillips' commissions were among the first and did much to launch Delk's subsequent career.

Delk came to the Philmont Ranch in late October of 1925 to draw the initial first floor plan and grounds sketch of what Phillips would call the Villa Philmonte. The final drawings were completed in the early part of the next year and construction began soon thereafter under the direction of the John Long Construction Company of Kansas City. The site selected was in the old Urraca Ranch apple orchard where the residence would command a panoramic view of the ranch's mountain backcountry to the west.

The Villa Philmonte was completed in the spring of 1927 and the Phillipses moved in during June with their two children, Helen Jane and Elliott. It was to become their summer home and headquarters for entertaining innumerable friends and business associates for the next twenty years.

Among the groups that assisted the Phillipses in celebrating their first summer at the Villa were Phillips' four brothers who spent the 4th of July holiday on the ranch. Several weeks later a party led by Vice President Charles G. Dawes visited the Phillipses and enjoyed their hospitality both at the Villa and at their mountain retreat, Rayado Lodge.

Whereas, Delk employed an elaborate Italian Renaissance design for Phillips' Tulsa mansion named Villa Philbrook, at Philmont he used a Spanish Mediterranean theme that blended well with its setting at the foot of the mountains. Built of solid masonry, the finished structure was stuccoed and painted a light buff color and trimmed in turquoise blue. The multilevel roof line, dominated by a cross gable arrangement, was surfaced with mission tiles of variegated colors. Arches were repeatedly used in arcades, doorways and dividing walls.

Two patios decorated with painted tile and separated by an open arcade were incorporated at the rear of the house. A two-story guest house with a balcony fronted the south patio while a swimming pool was located east of the north or interior patio.

P. W. French of New York was engaged to design the house's interior composed of fifteen major rooms and five baths. He worked primarily with art, furniture and decorative objects that the Phillipses acquired in Spain and other countries on a return visit to the Mediterranean in the summer of 1926.

The living room, which dominates the home, is marked by massive painted ceiling beams and a large fireplace. A tiled conservatory with a fountain connects to the living room on the south.

The dining room is separated from the living room by a vestibule consisting of a series of four domed and painted ceilings. The westernmost of this series was the front and initially the main entrance to the Villa. Later it was adapted into the family breakfast room.

The dining room has a coffered ceiling and a large fireplace on the south end. Double doors leading to the west open to a stone-floored patio and fountain used for outside dining. Opposite the double doors, a door leads to the kitchen, pantry and servants' quarters.

Above the landing on the stairs leading to the second floor is a painted and leaded window. It depicts traders traveling the Santa Fe Trail near Tinaja Mountain, a trail landmark located northeast of Philmont. Also in the composition are several Indians, mounted horseback, each painted with a look of consternation as they watch the traders pass through their land.

A library equipped with a porthole window providing a view to the western

mountains is located at the head of the stairs while the wing to the north holds the children's bedrooms.

From the library, a hall leads southward to the master bedroom. Originally, an open air sun deck was attached to this bedroom on the south, but it was later enclosed and used as a sleeping porch. The Phillips' bathroom was equipped with both a shower and a bathtub, and separate dressing rooms and clothes closets were located on either side of it.

From the living room a stairway leads to a downstairs hallway where a large door opens to the auto court which was the primary entrance to the house. Two rooms flank the downstairs hall. The one on the east was Phillips' game room where he entertained guests. Its ceiling is made up of several New Mexican *viga* and *vigita* configurations. The opposite room, dominated by a massive stone fireplace, is hung with large game mounts indigenous to the ranch. Known as the Trophy Room, it served as a place for Phillips to entertain as well as his office when he was required to conduct business on the ranch.

A heavy wooden door on the west, simulating the entrance of a backwoods cabin, opens into what Phillips' called the Trapper's Closet. Inside he stored riding clothing, trap guns, hunting rifles, and fishing equipment to outfit guests on their western holidays on the ranch.

Waite Phillips was an advocate of Andrew Carnegie's "Gospel of Wealth." He strongly believed it was the responsibility of those who acquired riches to share them with others. "Real philanthropy," he once wrote, "consists of helping others, outside our own family circle, from whom no thanks is expected or required."

Throughout the Depression, Phillips aided a number of individuals and organizations that suffered economic hard-



Aerial view, back, ca. 1935.

ships. Moreover, as the Depression drew to a close, he began developing plans to dispose of much of his personal property and real estate. He started in 1938 by giving his estate, Philbrook, to the Southwest Art Association to serve as an art museum for the city of Tulsa.

Turning next to the Philmont Ranch, he and his family decided to deed 35,857 acres of the north part of the ranch to the members of the Boy Scouts of America. Phillips was impressed with the character building and citizenship training goals of the Scouting program, fulfilled through an active program of camping and hiking in the outdoors. He felt the Philmont Ranch property he offered the Scouts to be a perfect setting for them to pursue their program.

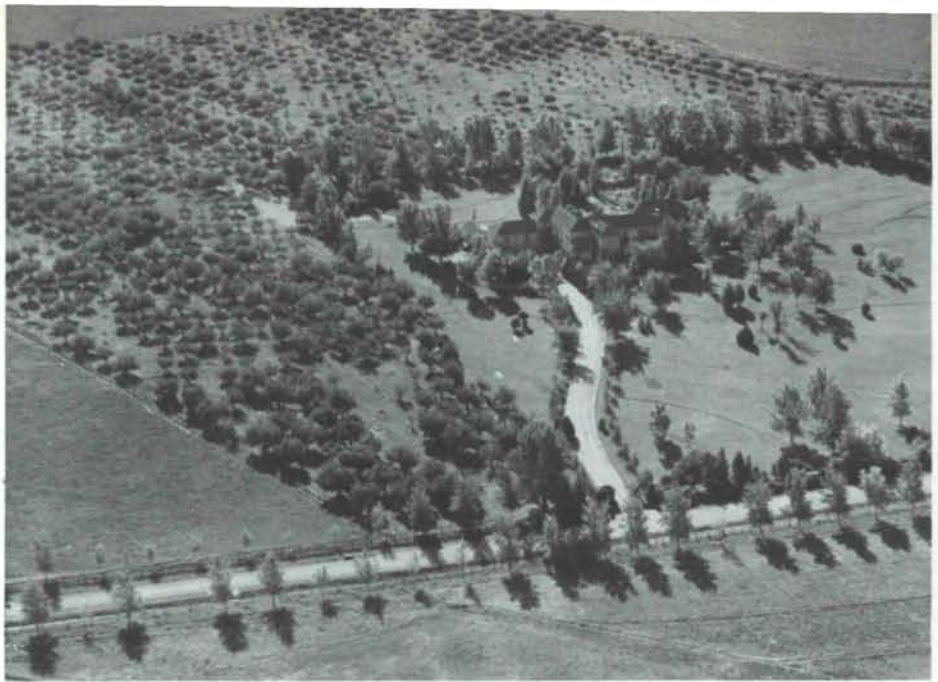
The National Council of the BSA accepted the gift and, after a thorough evaluation of the property and its resources, established a camp named Philturn Rockymountain Scoutcamp. Philturn was derived from Phillips' name and the BSA slogan, "Do a good turn daily."

After its initial season of 1939, Philturn developed and expanded its program and, as a result, saw a substantial increase in participation the following two years. Phillips took great interest in the development and participation at Philturn. He frequently drove by car or rode horseback to the camp to observe the Scouts in their activities.

Evidently pleased with what he saw, he again contacted BSA officials after the 1941 camping season to discuss with them the possibility of a further gift. The talks resulted in Phillips' decision to give the Scouts the entire headquarters of the ranch, including the Villa, plus an additional 91,538 acres of the mountainous part of the ranch. In addition he gave as part of the gift the Philtower Building, a 23 story office building he built and owned in downtown Tulsa, that was to be used as a permanent endowment for the ranch. Together the properties were valued at five million dollars.

Having divested himself of both his Tulsa and Philmont homes, Phillips and his wife moved into the penthouse of the Philcade Building, another of his Tulsa office buildings. They remained there until the winter of 1945 when they purchased a residence in Los Angeles and left Oklahoma and New Mexico for good.

The BSA, after acquiring the major part of the Philmont Ranch, changed the name of their operation to Philmont Scout Ranch. At first the Villa was used to house resident managers, but as soon as other accommodations were made ready for them, it was set aside only for meetings, receptions and tours by staff, campers and ranch visitors.





By the 1970s many of the interior furnishings were in need of restoration or replacement due to the considerable number of people who had visited the house. Beginning in 1976, Waite Phillips' son, Elliott and his wife, Virginia led efforts to restore the Villa to its appearance when it was the family home. A collection of over 200 photographs taken of the house in the 1930s proved invaluable in their work.

Since Waite Phillips' gift, more than 500,000 Scouts, Explorers and their leaders have hiked and camped on his ranch. And nearly 20,000 tour his home each year, where they not only learn how he and his family lived while on the ranch, but much about his generosity and foresight as well.

S.Z.

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Continued on page 19 ►



Top page 16: Villa Philmonte, Aerial view, front, ca. 1935. Middle: The living room. Most of the furniture and decorative objects were purchased by Mr. & Mrs. Phillips in Spain and Italy in the summer of 1926. Bottom: The interior patio. Waite Phillips is sitting on the stairs to the corner doorway.

Top page 17: The dining room. The portrait on the right is of Carlos Beaubien, part owner of the Beaubien and Miranda Land Grant of which Philmont is a part. His wife, Paulita, is on the left. Both portraits were purchased by Phillips during his residence in the Villa. Middle: The Trophy Room is located in the Villa's downstairs. Here Waite Phillips conducted business and entertained friends. The buffalo above the mantle piece came from the ranch herd which was part of the gift to the Boy Scouts. Bottom: The guesthouse and patio.

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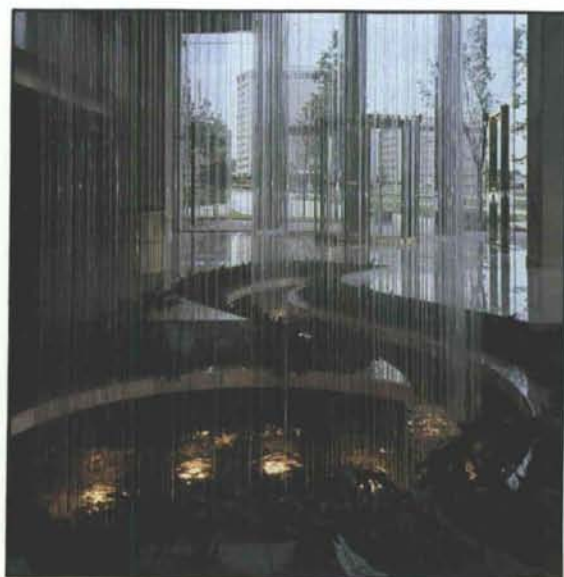
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MISCELLANEOUS

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Villa Philmonte Photo Collection, Seton Memorial Library, Philmont Scout Ranch, Cimarron, New Mexico.

Stephen Zimmer holds an M.A. in History from the University of New Mexico and has been Director of Museums at Philmont Scout Ranch since 1980. He has recently collaborated with Larry Walker on the book, *Philmont: An Illustrated History*.



Painted glass window located on the stairs landing at Villa Philmonte. It overlooks the interior patio.



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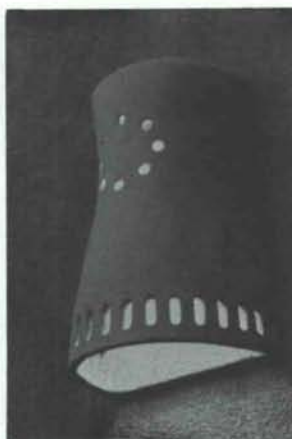
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