

## **The Schiff Estate**

The Schiff estate is located on 568 acres of wooded hills and tranquil countryside in Mendham Township. The handsome manor house on the estate once known as “Brookrace” was built in 1914 by Richard H. Williams as a wedding present for his son. In 1918, a north wing was added and connected to the original section by a porte-cochere. The addition features a three-story wrought iron



circular staircase leading to a tower and beautiful ballroom dominated by an immense ancient fireplace. Originally located in a French castle, the fireplace was brought to this country by famous architect Stanford White for his Park Avenue home in New York City. Williams purchased the fireplace in 1919 and had it dismantled, stone by stone, and erected in the ballroom for a cost of \$30,000. The fireplace was built in France by an Italian artisan during the reign of Henry (1519-1559) and had decorative medallions that were ninth century war medals. The estate was purchased in 1932 by Mrs. Jacob Schiff and donated to the Boy Scouts of America in memory of her son, Mortimer L. Schiff, who at the time of his death in 1931 was its president. Funds provided by Mrs. Schiff helped to establish a scout reservation and training center. The Schiff Reservation was operated until 1979 when it was purchased by AT&T for a regional conference and training center. In 1980, it became the home of the Women’s Association’s third Mansion in May. AT&T scrapped their development plans after public criticism; 186 acres of the Schiff estate were ultimately developed into residential housing, which now borders the preserve on three sides. The Schiff Natural Lands Trust, Inc., established in 1984, retained the remaining 300+ acres, preserving it permanently as open space.

