

The Vail Mansion

Nearly a century ago, Theodore Vail, president of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company, and chief architect of the Bell System, commissioned the design of an Italian Renaissance palazzo that would serve as both his residence and a museum for his family inventions. Vail hired architect William



Welles Bosworth who designed the original AT&T building in Manhattan, as well as the private homes of John D. Rockefeller, Kykuit in Pocantico Hills and Fifth Avenue. He also restored Rheims Cathedral, Versailles and Fontainebleau palaces. Construction began in 1916 when Vail was 70 years old. The original estimate was \$150,000 to build but actual cost was \$400,000 when it was finished in 1920. The Vail mansion is built of Vermont granite at its base and white Vermont marble on the rest of the exterior. The interior marble from Istria, Italy is seen on the impressive double-wide central staircase, fireplaces, walls, back stair, door surrounds and six huge marble columns in the massive front hall. The 20,000 -square-foot mansion features ceiling heights of 17 feet on the main floor and 12 feet on the second floor. Between the two floors is a mezzanine. Also of note are the solid bronze front doors depicting local history on their eight panels in addition to the formal reflecting pool. Vail died in 1920 before he could occupy the house. Although he wanted the house used “by a society combining cultural and museum activities,” Vail’s only heir sold the mansion to the Town of Morristown in 1922 for use as a municipal building for \$51,183.65. In 1997, the Women’s Association of Morristown Memorial Hospital held its ninth Mansion in May at this location. The Vail mansion is now home to privately owned residences and is listed on the National Historic Register of Places.

