

## **Upton Pyne**

Between 1870 and the 1920s, the Bernardsville area saw gracious living at its peak. In the 1870s, New York bankers, financiers and industrialists began to seek a summer refuge from the city and the gentle country life of the Somerset Hills became a rural refuge for New York City families, who bought up huge chunks of land.



The homes were manors, modeled after Victorian/Edwardian English counterparts. Even geographically, the countryside resembled the Somerset in England from which several of the families originally came. The well-staffed houses were spacious and magnificent, with substantial acreage for livestock, riding and carriage horses, orchards, and gardens. Somerset Hills with its elaborate country estates became known as the “Mountain Colony.” Upton Pyne is one of these homes. In 1898, Percy R. Pyne bought 200 acres on the Bernardsville mountain and construction of the stone house, designed by Lawrence Aspenwaul, began in 1899. The estate was named after Upton Pyne in Devon, England, his family’s ancestral manor. Many skilled craftsmen, who lived in temporary tarpaper houses, were hired to construct the main house, the barns and homes for the staff. The stone for the three-story house was purchased from the Hacklebarney quarry, and a narrow railroad was built by the Pynes to carry the stone up the side of the mountain. Mrs. Pyne resided in the house until her death in 1952. The Women’s Association hosted its first Mansion in May at Upton Pyne in 1974. Upton Pyne was the largest home in the area until it was destroyed by fire in 1982.

