



This paper will explore the issues surrounding the preservation of this site, particularly its significance to local and national history, its status as an iconic ruin, and appropriate approaches to its long-term preservation. The recent collapse of a portion of the tower highlights an urgent need for stabilization to prevent the total loss of these iconic Hudson Valley ruins.

STABILIZATION VERSUS RESTORATION:  
A DILEMMA AT BANNERMAN'S ISLAND

By

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## Dedication

I would like to dedicate this to my family, of my blood and heart, who have supported me in this adventure. Thanks to my sister and brother-in-law, Barbara and Don, for allowing me stay with them on my many visits to research and come home to my mountain and river. Without the constant support of my children, parents, and most importantly my husband, Hòà, this would not have been possible. Thanks to all of you.

*"Mountains are the beginning and end of all natural scenery." - John Ruskin*

*"All that is within me cries out to go back to my home on the Hudson River"*

*Franklin Delano Roosevelt*

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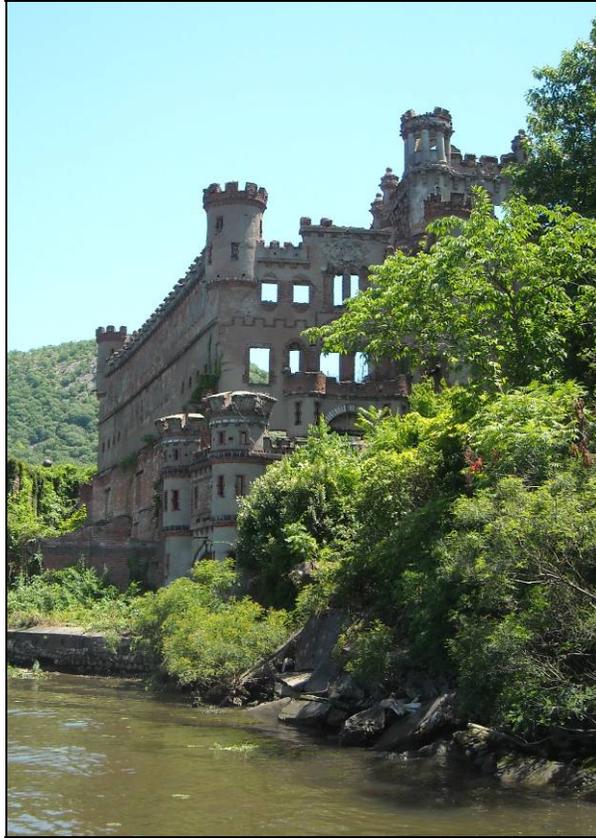
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## Chapter 1: Introduction

As one travels up New York's Hudson River, either by boat, train or car, it is the unexpectedness of seeing a castle which draws the eye. The structure seems as if it was plunked down from Scotland or the Rhine, a place out of context. The "skewness" of the castle and location is the very thing that makes Bannerman's Island Arsenal noteworthy. The arsenals and tower draw one to it, to learn its story, to understand how it came to be here and how it came to be a ruin (Figures 1 and 2).

Bannerman's Island is the common name of the island containing a complex of castle-like structures (arsenals and a family residence) built by Francis Bannerman VI between 1901 and 1918. A minimum of twenty structures were built during an eighteen-year period, including buildings for Bannerman's business as well as his family and structures in the water to form a breakwater and docking areas. He had plans to build additional structures but they were never started. While construction on the island was halted when Bannerman died in 1918, the island continued to be used by his family until the late 1950's. His sons continued his business, using the arsenals for storage and the family vacationed there until Francis Bannerman's wife passed away in 1931. The island was not open to the public during the Bannerman family ownership from 1900 to 1967; purchased by New York State in December 1967, the island remained closed to the public until 2004.



**Figure 1: View of the "the Castle" of Bannerman's Island, July 5, 2009, photograph by the author.**



**Figure 2: West wall of Arsenal No. 3, July 5, 2009, photograph by author.**

Owned by New York State since 1969, Bannerman's Island is an example of benign neglect. In 1998, a friends group, Bannerman Castle Trust (BCT), was created and this group opened the island to the public in 2004 and currently plans to restore the family residence with a \$350,000 matching grant. The residence, located on the western side of the island and separated from the rest of the complex, is not one of the structures that can be seen from the river or its shores and is not what one thinks of when referring to 'the castle' on Bannerman's Island. The residence is considered a ruin but retains more original fabric than does the arsenal complex (Figures 3 and 4).

During the winter of 2009-2010 portions of the iconic arsenals collapsed. Current plans are to stabilize and restore the residence for use as offices, exhibit space and an inclement weather shelter. This paper will examine the BCT's current plan in terms of its focus on the restoration of the residence, one of the island's non-iconic buildings, and will argue that stabilization of the Hudson Valley's iconic arsenals should instead be the primary preservation focus, as these castle-like structures serve a unique place in the history and landscape of the Hudson Valley. The paper will explore the issues surrounding the preservation of this site, particularly its significance to local and national history, its status as an iconic ruin, appropriate approaches to its long-term preservation, costs and resource considerations.

To facilitate the decision-making process for future preservation approaches chapters following the introductory chapter will explore the site from a historical, cultural and economic perspective. Chapter Two, The Historical and Cultural Context of Bannerman's Island, provides a historical background of the island as it progressed from being privately owned and used for the construction of a business and personal

complex by Francis Bannerman to becoming part of the New York State Park system. Chapter Three, *The Place of Ruins*, defines the concept of ruins and also examines the place of ruins in the cultural landscape. A discussion of the different treatment options for ruins as well as the types of treatment offered by New York State is provided in Chapter 4, *The Treatment of Ruins*. As in any preservation discussion, economics plays a vital role in many decisions. Chapter Five, *The Power of Money*, examines the difficulty in placing a value on an iconic structure in a cost-benefit analysis as well as the budget constraints facing New York State in 2010. Chapter Six, *Recommendations*, offers specific recommendations for the future of Bannerman's Island.



**Figure 3: Craig Inch Lodge, the family residence, July 5, 2009, photograph by the author.**



**Figure 4: Craig Inch Lodge, the Family Residence. July 5, 2009, photograph by author.**

## Chapter 2: The Historical and Cultural Context of Bannerman's Island

Bannerman's Island, part of New York State Hudson Highlands State Park, would seem unremarkable except for the castle-like ruins of the arsenal complex that rise up to catch a traveler's eye. Constructed as a business warehouse and personal retreat, the buildings on Bannerman's Island hold a unique place in the history of the Hudson Highlands. This chapter provides a physical description of the remaining buildings and the history of the island, its developer Francis Bannerman, and the spectacular structures. An understanding of the historical and cultural context of these iconic architectural creations will help the reader to appreciate the complex challenges facing those who seek to save it.

### **The History of Bannerman's Island**

Pollepel or (Pollopel) Island, located in the middle of the Hudson River, is known locally as Bannerman's Island, (Figure 5). From 1609, when Henry Hudson first sailed up what was then called the North River, until the American Revolution this island was rarely used. It was considered haunted by both Native Americans, local Dutch residents and the many sailors who traveled the river. Even the origin of its name, Pollepel, is unclear and explanations range from romantic tales to botanical references.<sup>1</sup>

During the Revolutionary War, the island's proximity to West Point and General Washington's Headquarters in Newburgh caused it to be considered for use

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas E. Rinaldi and Robert J. Yasinsac, *Hudson Valley Ruins: Forgotten Landmarks of an American Landscape*, (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2006), 171.



as a prison and later to be used as an end point for a cheveaux-de-frise to block British ships.<sup>2</sup> During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, local residents used it for recreation and reportedly stored bootleg items on the island to avoid taxation.

The island has had remarkably few owners. It was originally part of the Highland Patent deeded to Adolph Philipse in 1698. The Philipse descendants were Loyalists and the island was sold to William Van Wyck by the New York State Commissioner of Forfeitures on June 23, 1788. In 1888, Mary Taft of Cornwall-on-Hudson, New York, purchased the island.<sup>3</sup> On December 5, 1900, Francis Bannerman VI, a Scottish immigrant with a military surplus business, purchased the island for \$600.00 cash and a \$1,000.00 mortgage carried by Mary Taft. A condition of the sale was that the island was not to be used for the manufacture or sale of alcohol.<sup>4</sup>

### **Francis Bannerman: His Story**

Francis Bannerman VI immigrated to America as a child in 1854 and grew up in Brooklyn. While his father was fighting in the Civil War, he worked to support his family by retrieving rope and other material from the river to sell. Upon his father's return they opened what is believed to be the first Army-Navy Surplus Store. In 1872, Bannerman opened his own military surplus store in Brooklyn, in competition with his father.

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<sup>2</sup> Thom Johnson and Barbara Gottlock, *Images of America: Bannerman Castle*, (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 12, as found from Cornell University Library.

<sup>3</sup> Thom Johnson and Barbara Gottlock, *Images of America: Bannerman Castle*, (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 27.

<sup>4</sup> Thom Johnson and Barbara Gottlock, *Images of America: Bannerman Castle*, (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 28, from Hagley Museum and Library.

At the end of the Spanish-American War in 1898 Bannerman purchased approximately 90% of the military surplus goods left over from the war from the federal government.<sup>5</sup> Although he had a warehouse in Brooklyn he needed a safe, off site, storage facility for the black gun powder. It was this need along with larger storage facilities that led to his purchase of Pollepel Island. How Bannerman became aware of the island is unclear but historian Tom Lewis noted that the Hudson is a “river of utility” and that Bannerman recognized the island as being accessible to deep water shipping.<sup>6</sup> Bannerman hired a local construction company to begin work on the first of many structures on the island in 1901. The eastern half of the island served his business and the western half was for his family.<sup>7</sup>

Due to the growth of his business, Bannerman relocated to Manhattan and moved the business a number of times before settling at 501 Broadway in 1905. Bannerman also continued building on the island in order to warehouse the military goods he sold through his catalogs. In his catalogs he states, “Our reputation is known to all as the **Largest Dealers in the World in Military Goods.**”<sup>8</sup> The top two floors of his Broadway store contained “The Museum of Lost Arts”, with military items from the Stone Age to World War I. Although he was a surplus arms dealer he considered himself a peaceful man and hoped that his museum would end armed conflicts as people studied the artifacts of war.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas E. Rinaldi and Robert J. Yasinsac, *Hudson Valley Ruins: Forgotten Landmarks of an American Landscape*, (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2006), 172.

<sup>6</sup> Tom Lewis, *The Hudson*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 3.

<sup>7</sup> Rinaldi and Yasinsac, *Hudson Valley Ruins*, 172.

<sup>8</sup> Francis Bannerman, *Catalog Military Goods*, (Michigan: Cornell Publications, 2010), 2.

<sup>9</sup> Bannerman, *Catalog Military Goods*, 2.

The use of the island for his business is significant in the context of the history of commerce, war and the entrepreneurial spirit of immigrants in America in the nineteenth century. Bannerman began by fishing rope out of the East River as a young boy and grew his business into a world renowned company. Through his storefront and catalog business Bannerman supplied theater groups, circus performers, military collectors and foreign countries. His catalogs began in 1884 as handwritten booklets and grew to be over 300 typed pages by 1910. His inventory ran the gamut from caissons from the Civil War to pith helmets and machine guns. His company reportedly outfitted a former passenger ship into a battleship for a South American country in one week's time.<sup>10</sup> The isolation of the island also allowed him to store a large amount of ordinance including black gun powder, cannon balls, and ammunition.

Bannerman was very supportive of the WWI Allies. He shipped crutches to France and military clothing via the Belgian War Relief effort in nearby Cornwall. Despite his record of support, Bannerman was investigated by the Navy Intelligence Bureau in regards to the activities occurring on the island. The superintendent at that time, Charles Kovac, was Austrian and was arrested on the island April 19, 1918, as an alien enemy. He was paroled to Bannerman's supervision and was not permitted to perform any maritime occupations. During this time the island was occupied by naval intelligence and the Navy found four machine guns mounted in the tower. These were

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<sup>10</sup> Bannerman, *Catalog Military Goods*, 2.

reportedly used to salute passing river steamers.<sup>11</sup> Within months, Francis Bannerman VI died following gall bladder surgery.

### **The Construction of the Bannerman Island Arsenal Complex**

There is no documentation that gives exact construction dates for the many buildings on the island although an estimate of the building construction chronology for Bannerman's Island is shown in Table 1.

The first two structures built by Bannerman were a three-story arsenal on the northeast corner of the island and a small two-story superintendent's house near the arsenal. Over the next two decades, Bannerman designed and had constructed numerous buildings including three arsenals, the superintendent's house, a dock, a tower, the family residence, a grotto, the spring and ice houses, an outhouse, a lodge for workers and a twin-tower bridge. There were four cisterns for water collection. He and his wife Helen also created gardens and pathways with small resting spots.

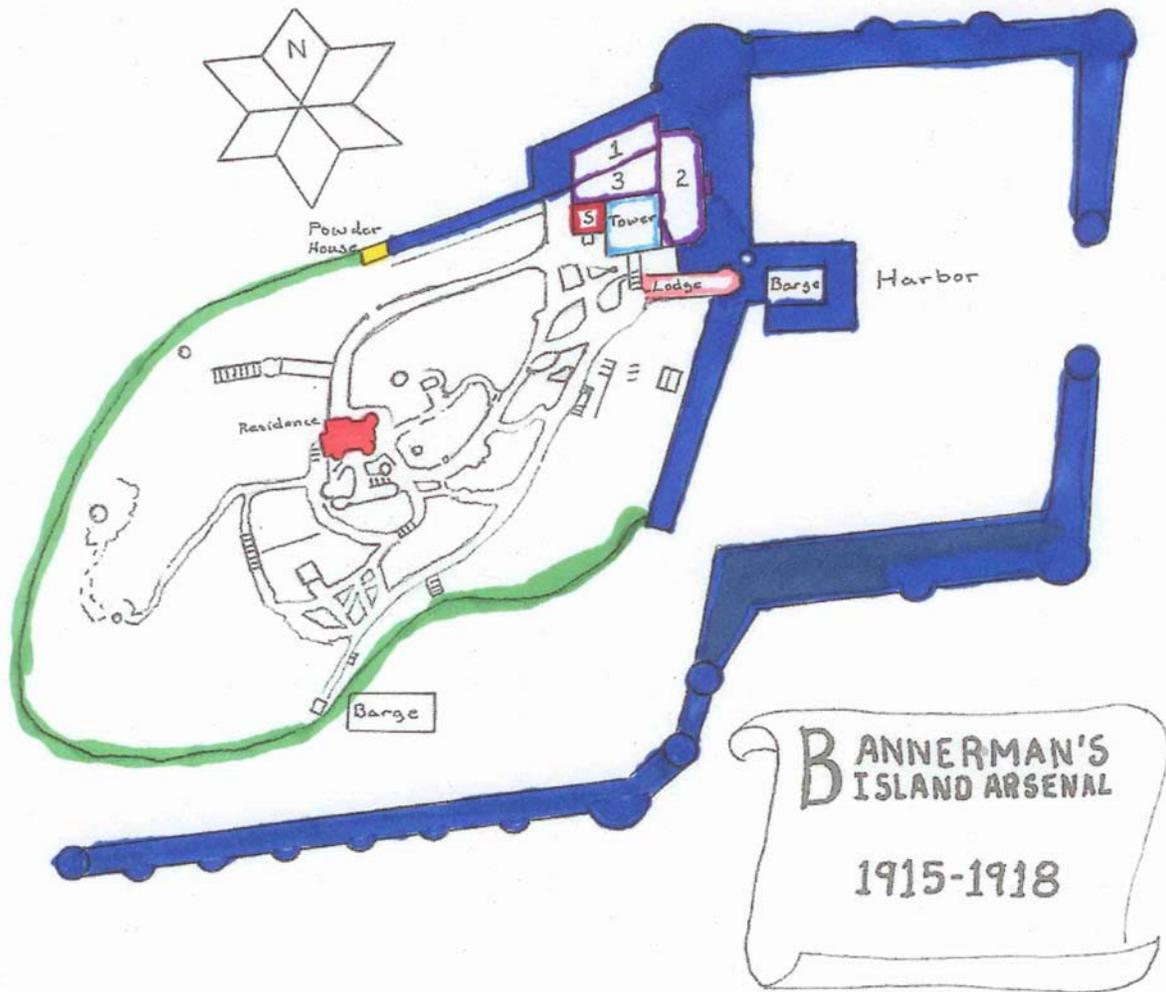
Bannerman also purchased seven acres of submerged land surrounding the east and south sides of the island. New York State requires underwater areas to have the property lines marked so Bannerman sunk barges and small boats along the underwater property line. He filled the barges with scrap from the construction on the island and built a walkway over them, thereby creating a harbor and breakwater. At the ends of the walkway he built the Gap Towers to mark the entrance into the island's harbor. The creation of the harbor is important as it allowed boats to arrive and depart with shipments to be stored in the arsenals or sent to buyers (Figures 6 and 7).

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<sup>11</sup> Thom Johnson and Barbara Gottlock, *Images of America: Bannerman Castle*, (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 28, from Hagley Museum & Library, 67.

**Table 1: Building Construction Chronology for Bannerman’s Island.**

<b><u>BUILDINGS</u></b>	<b><u>YEAR BUILT</u></b>
Arsenal No. 1	1901
Superintendent's House	1901
Small Dock	1901
Arsenal No. 2	1905
Harbor & Breakwater	1905
Terraced walls of Garden Brae	1905
Powder House	1905 – 1908
Arsenal No. 3	1908
Family Residence	1908
Tower	1909
North Gate	1909
Spring House	1923
Twin Towers	1912
Grotto	1910
Worker's Lodge	1917
Outhouse	1910 -1915
Wee Bay	1915
Sally port	1915
Ice house	1915 – 1918
Gun dock	1915 – 1918
Addition to residence	1915 – 1918



**KEY**

- |                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| 1, 2, 3             | ARSENALS, built 1901 – 1908             |
| S                   | Superintendent's House 1901             |
| Tower               | The portion known as 'The Castle', 1909 |
| Lodge               | Workers Lodge, 1917                     |
| Powder House        | 1905 - 1908                             |
| Residence           | 1908                                    |
| Breakwater          |   |
| Perimeter of Island |   |

Figure 6: Sketch by Thom Johnson of Bannerman's Island<sup>12</sup>; key by author. Used with permission

<sup>12</sup> Thom Johnson and Barbara Gottlock, *Images of America: Bannerman Castle*, (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 62.



**Figure 7: Aerial view of the remaining structures on Bannerman's Island via Google Earth, accessed April 12, 2010. Notice the remains of the breakwater to the south and east of the island. The new dock for tours is on the north side of the island, west of the arsenal complex.**

Bannerman did not have an architectural background but he designed all the buildings.<sup>13</sup> A frugal Scotsman, Bannerman reused various surplus materials in the construction of the buildings.<sup>14</sup> As Thomas Rinaldi notes in *Hudson Valley Ruins*, “Ever the resourceful recycler, Bannerman drew plans for his buildings on hotel stationery and used Victorian bed frames as rebar.”<sup>15</sup> These buildings all had masonry load bearing walls and included brick and stone which had been blasted from the island itself to form a level building grade. The exterior was coated with cement stucco.

When Bannerman first began designing these buildings they were not embellished. Arsenal No. 1 was originally whitewashed and then had lettering painted on three sides to advertise his surplus business. By 1905 he began to build Arsenals No. 2 and No. 3, and he had “BANNERMAN ISLAND ARSENAL” mortared into the side of the building in four and one half foot tall letters so to be seen by people traveling by either ships or rail<sup>16</sup> (Figures 8 and 9).

Bannerman added ornamentation to all the structures over time to make them appear more “castle-like.”<sup>17</sup> This included crenellated towers, turrets, stucco coat of arms, and cannon balls mortared into walls. He based the buildings on the island on the castles found in his native Scotland and named the island “Craig Inch” which is Gaelic for “Rocky Island.”<sup>18</sup> As noted in *Bannerman Castle*, Bannerman built an

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<sup>13</sup> Rinaldi and Yasinsac, *Hudson Valley Ruins*, 172.

<sup>14</sup> Jan Hird Pokorny Associates, Inc. “Craig Inch Lodge The Bannerman Family Residence on Bannerman’s Island Hudson Highlands State Park,” *Historic Structure Report*, (New York: October 14, 2008), 17.

<sup>15</sup> Rinaldi and Yasinsac, *Hudson Valley Ruins*, 173.

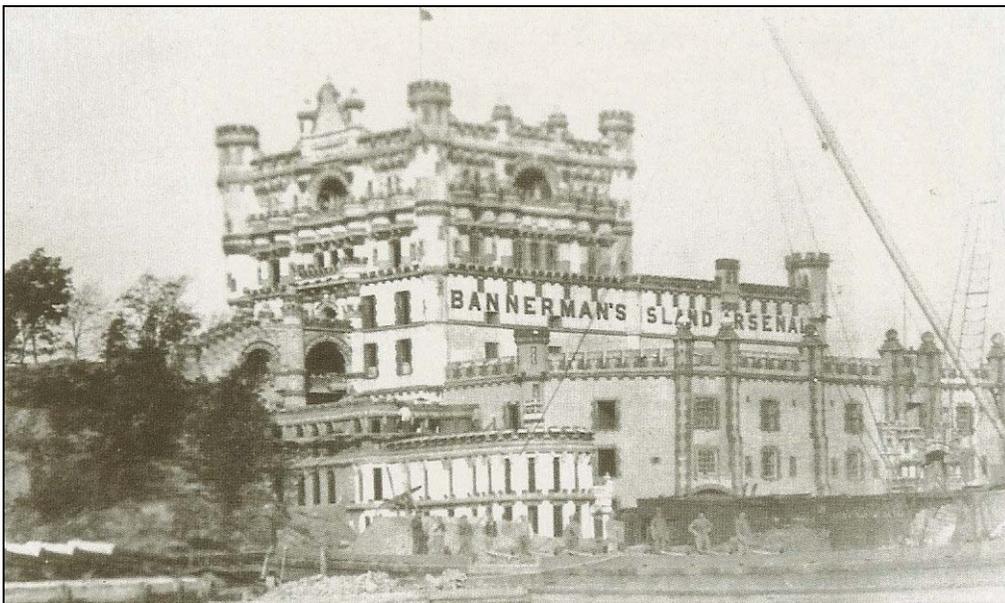
<sup>16</sup> Thom Johnson and Barbara Gottlock, *Images of America: Bannerman Castle*, (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 42, from Hagley Museum.

<sup>17</sup> Rinaldi and Yasinsac, *Hudson Valley Ruins*, 172.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*



**Figure 8: 1905, Arsenal No. 1, Whitewashed with billboard lettering to advertise the business. Thom Johnson and Barbara Gottlock, *Images of America: Bannerman Castle*, (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 34. Used with permission.**



**Figure 9: 1916, lettering mortared onto side of Arsenal No. 3. with Arsenal No. 2 located in front of it. The Worker's Lodge is the white curved building to the left of Arsenal No. 2. Thom Johnson and Barbara Gottlock, *Images of America: Bannerman Castle*, (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 39. Used with permission.**

“enchanted castle complex” which served two functions, one for business needs and the other as a “visual spectacle and source of wonder and inspiration to generations.”<sup>19</sup> Bannerman’s business flourished and his catalogs prominently featured the arsenal complex on the covers. He also eventually added a tower to the arsenals. The first tower, shown on the catalog cover was shorter but it eventually became five stories tall, with a crenellated exterior adorned with coat of arms, cannon balls and ivy. A moat, portcullis, drawbridge, and a twin-towered water entrance were built to further evoke a Scottish castle. The tower, also known as “the Castle” became the island’s “most distinctive structure.”<sup>20</sup> Throughout the family’s ownership, the Bannerman’s had a caretaker on the property and the island was strictly off limits to the public and customers.

### **Physical Description**

The six and one-half acre Bannerman’s Island lies approximately 1000 feet (ft.) from the eastern shore of the Hudson River and roughly 60 miles north of New York City. It is comprised of rocky terrain with large mature trees and a complex understory of small trees, bushes, ground covers and vines. The landscape contains the remains of overgrown formal gardens with seating areas and pathways. There are seven additional acres of underwater property attached to the ownership of this island. Breakwaters and towers marking the underwater property line have deteriorated and are not always visible. The harbor has become silted and can only accept flat bottomed boats.

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<sup>19</sup> Thom Johnson and Barbara Gottlock, *Images of America: Bannerman Castle*, (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 8.

<sup>20</sup> Arthur Drooker, *American Ruins*, (New York: Merrill, 2007), 34.

The main complex, comprised of six buildings, is extremely large, totaling approximately 150 ft. by 110 ft. with heights varying from two to five stories. The tower is the central core in the complex of buildings comprised of three arsenals (Arsenal No. 1, Arsenal No. 2, and Arsenal No. 3), a tower, a workers lodge, and a superintendent's lodge. All the buildings share adjoining walls. The tower portion of this complex is referred to as "the Castle." None of the buildings have roofs, windows or doors; they are just partial shells of the original structures.

The 65 ft. by 50 ft., five-story tower is the most imposing part of the complex; Arsenal No. 1 and Arsenal No. 3 are located behind the tower, to the north. Their adjoining wall no longer exists, appearing in aerial photographs to be one large space approximately 95 ft. along its exterior north wall with a 40 ft. west wall and 64 ft. east wall. The south wall of Arsenal No. 3 contains 25 ft. of the superintendants lodge and then jogs northeast to continue 68 ft. Arsenal No. 2 is located to the east of the tower and extends back to share a wall with Arsenal No. 1 and Arsenal No. 3.

The front façade of the tower is a seven-bay, five-story symmetrical façade constructed in cement stucco covered brick and has a large 15 ft. wide staircase that leads up to an arched doorway on the center of the third story. Each story is articulated by a stringcourse of ornamentation, varying in style for each level from very plain exposed brick to cannon ball ornamentation at the bottom to crenellated mini towers at the top. The center of the façade protrudes from the rest of the wall, with arched window openings on two of the levels. The top floor is embellished with the remains of the family crest that Bannerman created. Each end of the tower has a round crenellated tower, which is carried down the corner of the building. Concrete

brackets, cement-covered cannon balls, and stepped brick work form the unique decoration on the tower (Figure 10). This pattern of ornamentation, windows and arches was replicated on all sides of the tower. All that currently remains of the tower is part of the south facing façade and the west façade. Below the stairs for the tower is the sally port.

The arsenals continue this castle motif. The 110 ft. eastern façade had the words “BANNERMAN’S ISLAND ARSENAL” cemented along the side just below the crenellated parapet on the wall of Arsenal No. 3. The northeast corner contains a slightly cantilevered tower at the top of the wall. The exterior wall of Arsenal No. 2 is parallel to this wall but is lower so that the lettering on Arsenal No. 3 is visible. Vegetation, especially ivy, grows along the eastern Arsenal No. 2 wall, almost completely covering the window and arched door openings. The exterior north wall of Arsenal No. 1 also has lettering but it is broken into two rows.

The two-story worker’s lodge, measuring 60 ft. by 25 ft., and located southeast of the tower, is a rectangular building with a rounded end facing the river. It is decorated in the same style as the tower and arsenals. The two-story superintendent’s house, measuring 50 ft. by 25 ft. and located west of the tower, was a plain unadorned brick building that has minimal original fabric remaining.

The other remaining building is the family residence which is located on a small protected hill on the western half of the island. It is also a ruin, the results of exposure to weather, fire and vandals; there are no doors, windows or roof and vegetation covers a large portion of the building. The residence was built in four stages from 1908 to 1918, contained the only indoor toilet on the island, and had



**Figure 10: South Façade of the Tower, July 5, 2009, photograph by the author. The right side of this view is now gone.**

electricity added after Bannerman's death. It was originally built as a small square structure with corner turrets.<sup>21</sup> By 1918, the residence was a two story structure with an asymmetrical façade on a sloping lot; it had a cement stucco exterior scored to appear to look like ashlar masonry and turrets covered with smooth stucco on each end. A large picture window with a brick surround is centered on the first floor and rounded, ground to roof turrets appear on each corner. A curved wing extended from the west side and originally contained numerous windows on both floors. The center of the top of the front façade protrudes and contains the Bannerman Family Coat of Arms. Bannerman was part of the MacDonald Clan and was very proud of his Scottish heritage. A plaque in the Dining Room notes the inclusion of a foundation stone from a 1692 MacDonald home that Bannerman brought back from Scotland.<sup>22</sup>

The Historic Structure Report (HSR) for the family residence, called Craig Inch Lodge, was completed in 2008 and describes the building materials used, including salvaged materials from the island. The walls were load bearing mortared brick covered with stucco on the exterior and plaster on the interior. Bricks from at least nine different brick makers in the Hudson Valley were noted as being used in the construction of the residence. Structural reinforcements used in construction included typical types of ferrous materials such as expanded metal lath, and atypical materials such as railroad ties, flat plate and rod bayonets.<sup>23</sup>

The arsenals, tower, and other buildings on the island were constructed in a similar manner. Visual inspection of the castle shows exposed bricks which are

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<sup>21</sup> Jan Hird Pokorny Associates, Inc. "Craig Inch Lodge, The Bannerman Family Residence on Bannerman's Island, Hudson Highlands State Park", *Historic Structure Report*, 14 October 2008, 12.

<sup>22</sup> Jan Hird Pokorny Associates, Inc. "Craig Inch Lodge, E 23.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

spalling and crumbling, covered with crumbling stucco which had been applied exterior (Figures 10 and 11).

### **The Beginning of the Hudson Valley’s “Premier Ruin”**

In 1918 Francis Bannerman died and two of his sons took over the business. Two years later, on August 15, 1920, the powder house exploded with such force that windows in the family residence and arsenal were blown out as were windows in buildings on the mainland. A portion of wall was thrown onto the New York Central railroad tracks located on the eastern shore of the Hudson River. Structural damage also occurred to the arsenal.<sup>24</sup> Following the blast, repairs were not made to the arsenal and the elements began to take their toll (Figure 13).

After the explosion, most of the business was moved to a site on Long Island, although munitions and other inventory were stored on the island until the 1950’s. The Bannerman family continued to summer on the island until Helen Bannerman’s death in 1931 and a caretaker, his wife and ten children lived on the island year round until the 1940’s. After Mrs. Bannerman’s passing, maintenance declined and the family used the island less and less frequently. With the death of Bannerman’s sons the business declined; his grandson Charles Bannerman had the ammunition deactivated and removed from the island in 1959.<sup>25</sup>

### **Hudson Highland State Park**

Beginning in the 1930’s, the area around Bannerman’s Island was developed into Hudson Highlands State Park. The first two parcels purchased for the park, located on Breakneck Ridge, east of the island, were acquired in 1938. The next

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<sup>24</sup> Thom Johnson and Barbara Gottlock, *Images of America: Bannerman Castle*, (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 73 & 82, from Hagley Museum.

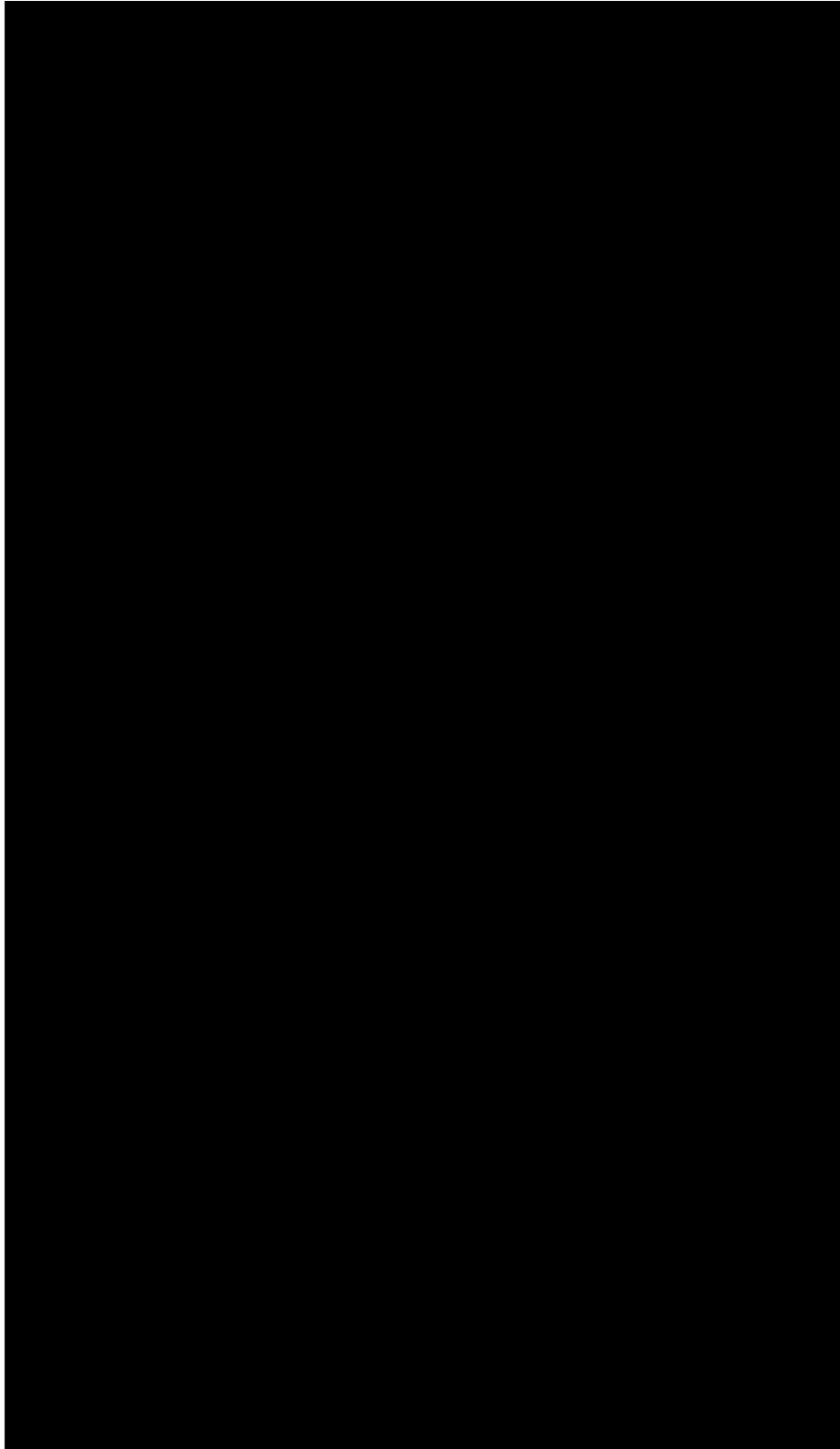
<sup>25</sup> Rinaldi and Yasinsac, *Hudson Valley Ruins*, 175.



**Figure 11: Looking down into Workers Lodge with the east bank of the Hudson River in the background. November 2008, Photograph by Karen Peterson, used with permission.**



**Figure 12: Interior of the Castle, November 2008. Photograph by Karen Peterson, used with permission.**



**Figure 13: Powder House post explosion, 1920. The blown out windows were never repaired. Thom Johnson and Barbara Gottlock, *Images of America: Bannerman Castle*, (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 62, from Hagley Museum and Library.**

addition came in the 1960's and included approximately 2,500 acres which were "acquired by New York State with the assistance of the Rockefeller family's foundation, Jackson Hole Preserve."<sup>26</sup> The Jackson Hole Preserve matched a 1967 New York State Legislature appropriation of \$750,000. Through this funding Little Stony Point and Bannerman's Island were acquired and became part of the Hudson Highlands State Park.<sup>27</sup> Upon acquiring Bannerman's Island, New York State denied public access the island to the public for safety reasons.

In 1982, The Hudson Highlands Multiple Resource Area was listed on the National Register of Historic Places and included Bannerman's Island.<sup>28</sup> The nomination includes an area that encompasses 12 municipalities in five counties in the Mid-Hudson Valley. The area was nominated due to its "unique geographical, environmental, and historical characteristics which are readily distinguishable from the rest of the region."<sup>29</sup> A total of 56 individual properties and three historic districts were included in the nomination. Bannerman's Island is mentioned as a historic resource in context with its place in the American Revolution; specifically "the cheveux-de-frise submerged off Pollopel's Island (Bannerman's Island)."<sup>30</sup> It is also mentioned again in the context of the "magnitude of the scenic landscape [which] often inspired a comparison with the Rhine Valley of Germany. Some people actually

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<sup>26</sup> New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, "Timeline for Development of the Parks," *Clarence Fahnestock Memorial and Hudson Highlands State Parks Draft. Master Plan and Draft. Environmental Impact Statement Public Information Meeting*, September 26, 2009, 5 <http://NewYorkparks.state.ny.us/inside-our-agency/documents/HudsonHighlandsInformationMeetingPacket.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> "Hudson Highlands Multiple Resource Area," *National Register for Historic Places*, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, 1982, sec 7 p. 7.

<sup>29</sup> "Hudson Highlands Multiple Resource Area," *National Register for Historic Places*, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, 1982, sec 7 p. 7.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, sec 8, 10.

took the comparison to heart and erected actual castles...Bannerman's Island, on an island near Beacon."<sup>31</sup> Today, Hudson Highland State Park contains 6,832 acres and has over 360,000 visitors annually and is maintained by New York State Taconic Park Commission.

Although closed to the public, unauthorized visitors have always been a problem and remain one. On the night of August 8, 1969, a fire broke out in the arsenal complex, leaving it a ruined shell. According to local newspaper accounts, the fire was so hot firefighters were unable to battle the blaze and left the buildings to burn once it was determined there was no one trapped inside.<sup>32</sup> The cause was never determined and all that was left of Bannerman's Arsenal complex were the exterior walls (Figure 14).

In the 1980's there was a proposal to lease the island to a private vendor who wanted to open it to the public. Neil Larson, working for New York State Historic Preservation Office (NYSHPO), was sent to the island to document and assess the historic conditions of the island. According to Neil Larson, SHPO staff determined "any amount of public access (and the infrastructure it would require) would have an adverse effect on the ruin and the fragile landscape."<sup>33</sup> He recalls that NYSOPRHP rejected the proposals based on their understanding that protecting the integrity of the ruin was a condition of the Rockefeller gift.

The castle-like tower and attached arsenals on Bannerman's Island have become one of the Hudson River's iconic sites. As Thomas Rinaldi states in *Hudson*

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<sup>31</sup> "Hudson Highlands Multiple Resource Area," *National Register for Historic Places*, sec 8, 11.

<sup>32</sup> Bob Pappe, "Arson Suspected in Bannerman Castle Fire," *The Times Herald Record*, Aug 9, 1969, 3.

<sup>33</sup> Neil Larson, Questionnaire by author, March 1, 2010.



**Figure 14: 1969, Interior of Arsenal No. 2 after the fire. Thom Johnson and Barbara Gottlock, *Images of America: Bannerman Castle*, (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 105. Used with permission.**

*Valley Ruins*, “from the time of its construction, Bannerman Island Arsenal instantly captured the popular imagination, and the complex of warehouses became known throughout the Hudson Valley simply as Bannerman’s Castle.”<sup>34</sup> He notes that its unique architecture caused many to perceive it as an antique before it was even 20 years old. The fascination with Bannerman’s Castle clearly continues today, as it is now considered “the Hudson River Valley’s premier ruin.”<sup>35</sup> Photographs of the arsenal and tower complex are included in a host of books about local and national ruins making it “among the most recognized historic sites in the Hudson Valley”<sup>36</sup> (Figure 15).

Books on the history of the Hudson recognize the importance of Bannerman’s castle. For example, historian Tom Lewis opens his book, *The Hudson*, with Francis Bannerman’s story and relates it to the “four themes that thread their way through this history of the river and the valley: utility, individuality, community and symbol.”<sup>37</sup> The life of Francis Bannerman as an immigrant, entrepreneur, and creator of his own folly symbolizes these four themes. He was an individual who, through the purchase of Pollepel Island, recognized that he could create a place where he could safely store his munitions, using the river for transportation. Of course, he also used the island as the site for his “castle,” which provided a feeling of local identity for those who were raised in the Hudson Valley in the 20th century.

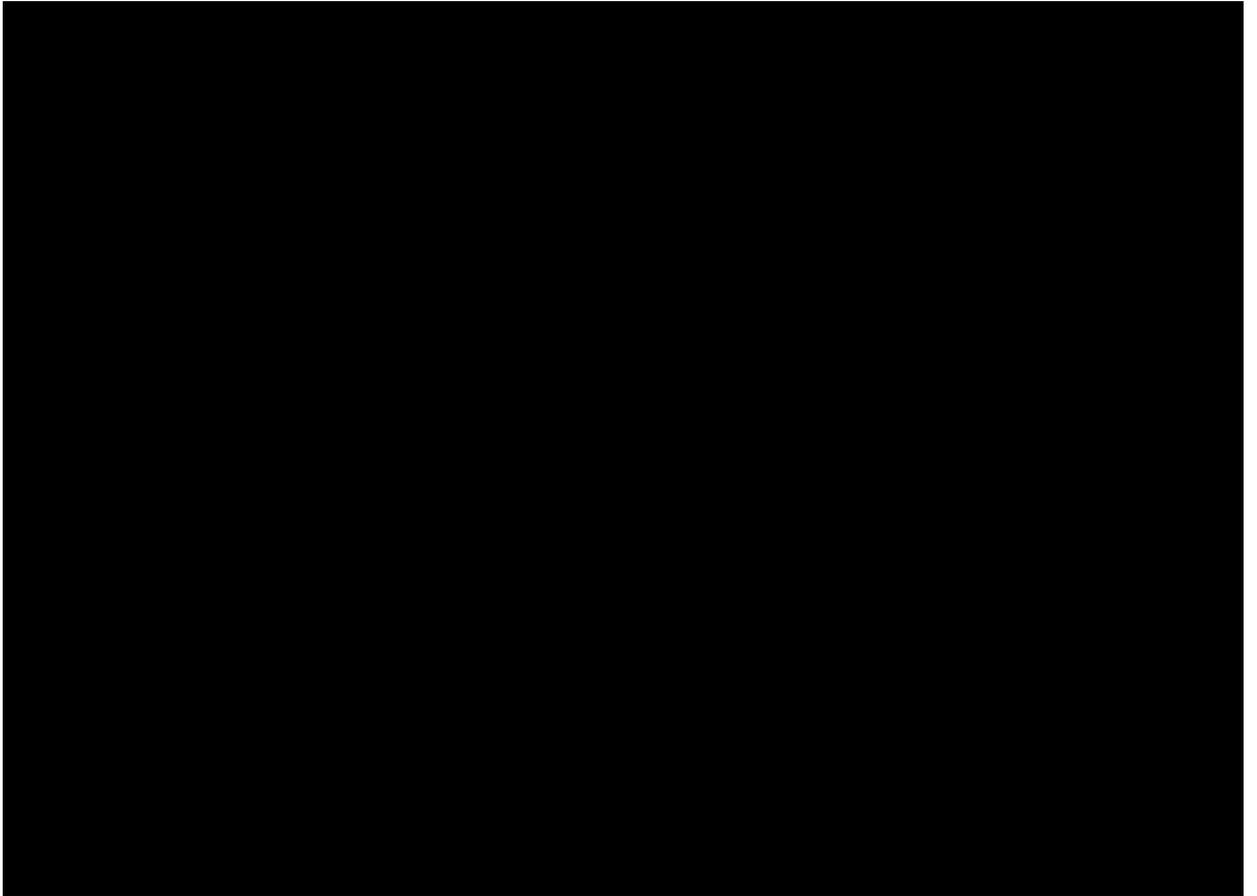
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<sup>34</sup> Rinaldi and Yasinsac, *Hudson Valley Ruins*, 173.

<sup>35</sup> Drooker, *American Ruins*, 34.

<sup>36</sup> Rinaldi and Yasinsac, *Hudson Valley Ruins*, 177.

<sup>37</sup> Lewis, *The Hudson*, 3.



**Figure 15: "The Castle" as an iconic part of the Hudson Valley. Arthur Drooker, *American Ruins*, (New York: Merrill, 2007), 34.**

## **Bannerman Castle Trust, Inc. (BCT)**

Despite its magnetism, Bannerman's Castle sat on its rocky island, closed to the public for much of its recent history. In 2004, the island was opened for hard hat tours by Bannerman Castle Trust, Inc. (BCT). Established in 1993 in New York City by Neil Caplan, the organization became the official, 501(c) 3 not-for-profit, friends group that works with New York State in creating a plan and vision for the island. The BCT's mission is "to preserve and protect Bannerman Island for the public to experience as an educational, cultural, historical and recreational facility promoting tourism in the Hudson Valley."<sup>38</sup>

The BCT has worked steadily to create safe, legal access for visitors. Pathways have been reopened, lost stairs found, flora & fauna studies undertaken, and grants and fundraisers pursued since its inception.<sup>39</sup> Before island access was granted by New York, boat tours around the island were offered to visitors. An observation platform is provided at the Bannerman Island Scenic Overlook on the east bank of the Hudson River off of Rte 9 north of Cold Spring. The island was shut down for 16 weeks in 2008 when unexploded ordinance was found. In 2008, a HSR was completed by Jan Hird Pokorny Associates for the Craig Inch Lodge, the family residence; a HSR for the arsenals has not been completed. This work was funded through a grant from the Dyson Corporation.<sup>40</sup> The completion of the report has allowed the BCT to receive a "matching Environmental Protection Fund Challenge

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<sup>38</sup> Bannerman Castle Trust, "About Us," <http://www.bannermancastle.org/about.html>.

<sup>39</sup> The Bannerman Castle Trust, Inc., *Bannerman Castle*, 1998, 26.

<sup>40</sup> The Bannerman Castle Trust, Inc., "The Next Step To Preserving Bannerman Castle: The History and Planned Stabilization of the Bannerman Residence," *The Banner*, 1.

Grant for \$ 350,000 to stabilize the Bannerman Residence.”<sup>41</sup> As of November 2009, \$220,000 had been raised towards the match.

Unfortunately portions of the tower structure have recently begun to collapse. On December 26 and 27, 2009, the southeast corner of the tower collapsed, removing approximately 1/3 of the south wall and 2/3 of the east wall. More severe winter weather took its toll on the tower on January 26, 2010, when the entire north wall collapsed; this wall had not had any previous history of collapse. The superintendent’s lodge, the worker’s lodge and the Arsenal No. 2 and Arsenal No. 3 are still standing. In March 2010, members of the BCT paddled over to the island to make a brief, informal survey of the damage. They discovered that the majority of the debris from the collapse landed in the interior of the shell, minimizing additional damage. There is debris on top of the portcullis and the workers lodge but they did not collapse. One of the large towers is still intact, on the ground inside what remains of the tower. Ironically, this collapse was predicted by James F. Moogan, executive director of the Taconic Region of the New York Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. In 1997 he commented to the Times Herald Record that “For years the agency left it as a scenic ruin but we’re going to have a pile of rubble in the next 10 to 15 years.”<sup>42</sup>

Despite the damage this past winter, the BCT plans on reopening tours in May 2010 and creating new pathways to the residence that keep visitors safely away from the unstable arsenal ruins. Barbara Gottlock, of the BCT, reported at a members

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<sup>41</sup> The Bannerman Castle Trust, Inc., “The Next Step To Preserving Bannerman Castle: The History and Planned Stabilization of the Bannerman Residence,” *The Banner*, 1

<sup>42</sup> Wayne A. Hall, “Old castle crumbling into rubble, Preservationists seeking aid for Bannerman’s Island,” *Middletown Times Herald Record*, March 25, 1997, 5.

meeting in January 2010 that the BCT would be required to keep island visitors at least 180 feet away from the tower for safety purposes. It will be difficult for visitors to get a good view of the tower and arsenals now given this parameter and the vegetation and rugged terrain of the island.

### **National Register Significance**

Although the collection of buildings located on Bannerman's Island is part of the National Register nomination for the Hudson Highland State Park they would also qualify for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places individually via Criteria A, B and C.

Eligibility under Criterion A is determined by an association with events that contribute to the broad pattern of history. The arsenal complex was built specifically to house a new type of business, military surplus, begun in part by Francis Bannerman and his father. The Army-Navy store is a nationally recognized type of commercial enterprise that allows for the buying and selling of surplus military goods. Bannerman's Island was bought specifically to house Francis Bannerman's large inventory of surplus military goods, and its image was used on the catalog of his business to represent his company.

Under Criterion B, Francis Bannerman, himself, is a historically significant person, associated with his business as one of the pioneers of this new type of business venture. Although Francis Bannerman VI died in 1918, his business continued until the 1970's and his catalogs are still being reprinted today. The buildings of Bannerman's Island are also significant under Criterion C, as they embody the distinctive characteristics of a pseudo-medieval Scottish castle revival.

Designed by Bannerman himself, they were constructed to evoke a specific image of his homeland in a landscape lacking any castles.

The ruins that comprise the arsenal complex and residence of Bannerman's Island were built to fulfill the dreams of one man – Francis Bannerman. Their iconic stature is well documented and their place in the cultural landscape, as well as the role of ruins in both history and the Hudson Valley, will be discussed in the Chapter 3.

## Chapter 3: The Place of Ruins

The United States faced with a lack of history that comes from being a young nation, has grappled with the lack of ruins almost since its inception. Some even went so far as to create follies of ruins that literally created a visual past on the landscape. Ruins play an important role in the landscape. The definition of ruins, the role of ruins, especially in the Hudson Valley and their place in the cultural landscape are all aspects that must be examined in consideration to the significance of Bannerman's Island. This chapter examines these elements and demonstrates that Bannerman's Castle resides in a unique place in the cultural landscape of the Hudson Valley.

### **Ruins Defined**

The word ruin can conjure up a vision of old crumbling buildings covered with vegetation as well as pictures of iconic structures such as Greece's Acropolis or Rome's Coliseum. It has been defined by many over the centuries but all definitions seem to contain three major elements – nature, the built-environment, and human beings.<sup>43</sup> Often the verbs used in these definitions contain words filled with destructive overtones such as revenge, assault, and loss.<sup>44</sup>

In many definitions there is a description of the process of nature overcoming the built environment of man which involves a symbiotic relationship between the three elements of nature, the built environment and people. Author Robert Gingsberg defines ruin as the “irreparable remains of a human construction that, by a destructive

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<sup>43</sup> Florence M. Hetzler, “The Aesthetic of Ruins: A New Category of Being,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Vol. 16, No. 2, Summer 1982, 105.

<sup>44</sup> Robert Gingsburg, *The Aesthetic of Ruins*, (New York, Rodopi, 2004), 285.

act or process, no longer dwells in the unity of the original,”<sup>45</sup> Florence Hetzler defines ruin as “the disjunctive product of the intrusion of nature without loss of the unity that man produced.”<sup>46</sup> This interplay of elements has been recognized since at least 1801 when Ercole Silva of Milan observed that “nature takes its revenge and, through the assaults of vegetation, reconquers what man has built.”<sup>47</sup> Although many ruins have been reclaimed by nature, Drooker in *American Ruins*, notes that this gives them a “profound grace.” He credits nature as being the “magic formula” in making ruins a “happy uplifting place.”<sup>48</sup>

Ruins are measureless, tenacious and retain their power to evoke emotions in humans. It is the human interaction with the ruin that gives it power. We use our senses to interact with the ruin, allow our mind to stir up memories that give the ruin power. We allow ruins to become works of art in our minds, regardless of their history. Additionally ruins are, as Hetzler tells us, a combination of various factors drawing on art, science and technology.<sup>49</sup> All of these factors are things created by people, just as the ruin itself is a creation of humans. It is only through its interaction with nature that a building can completely become a ruin. Even when man-made events, such as fire or vandalism, intervene it is only after nature begins to soften the sharp edges of a structure that we think of it truly as a ruin.

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<sup>45</sup> Gingsburg, *The Aesthetic of Ruins*, 285.

<sup>46</sup> Hetzler, “The Aesthetic of Ruins,” 105.

<sup>47</sup> Gionata Rizzi, “Preface,” *Conservation of Ruins*, John Ashurst, ed., (New York: Elsevier Limited, 2007), xxi.

<sup>48</sup> Drooker, *American Ruins*, p.18.

<sup>49</sup> Florence M. Hetzler, “Causality: Ruin Time and Ruins,” *Leonardo*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 1988, 51.

## **Ruin Time and Ruin Beauty**

The emotional component of a ruin is key in our view of the ruin and the place it holds in our landscape. A building that has burned and sits on a city block does not contain that same mystique that the same building, softened by wind and water, covered in vegetation will receive. It becomes, as Hetzler says, a “new unity.”<sup>50</sup> She has coined the term “ruin time” to describe the process of “time creat[ing] the ruin by making it something other than what it was, something with a new significance, with a future that is to be compared with its past.”<sup>51</sup> Ruin time can create “a peace that is absent in the case of devastation.”<sup>52</sup>

Hetzler takes this concept one step farther when she explains that ruin time leads to ruin beauty. Here is the emotional component of the experience. Ruin beauty is distinct. Paul Zucker believes that ruins are “a vehicle to create a romanticizing mood with all of its associations.”<sup>53</sup> The ruination of the structure dulls the edges, symbolizing the blurring of our memories as we reflect our own history and relationship to the site.

## **Cultural Landscape**

The field of historic preservation places importance on cultural landscapes which are defined as the “natural environment as modified by man.”<sup>54</sup> The concept of the cultural landscape allows us to recognize the landscape as a concept, not just a place. It is unique by definition and is also described as “that combination of natural

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<sup>50</sup> Hetzler, “The Aesthetic of Ruins,” 105.

<sup>51</sup> Hetzler, “Causality: Ruin Time and Ruins,” 54.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Paul Zucker, “Ruins: An Aesthetic Hybrid,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 20, No. 2, (Winter 1961), 120.

<sup>54</sup> J. B. Jackson, *The Necessity of Ruins*, (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), 2.

landforms and buildings that defines a particular place or region.”<sup>55</sup> Identifying what is culturally significant and deserving of preservation can be difficult.

There is an interaction between the land and the people that gives the landscape value. This is an “intricate relationship...based upon what happened in a day, or it may include years of change and transition.”<sup>56</sup> Our value of a landscape is based on how it looks as well as how it shares sensory needs, how it makes us feel, what we determine to be special about the place. Through these shared experiences and emotional reactions we establish bonds with others who react in similar ways. As J. B. Jackson tells us “it is only when we begin to participate emotionally in a landscape that its uniqueness and beauty are revealed to us.”<sup>57</sup>

These shared reactions are important in helping to make the determination of what to preserve in the landscape. They serve as the impetus for preservation and often inspire friends groups to save the things they value. These shared reactions help to provide the needed context that “goes beyond the physical and visual surroundings to the concern and attitude that govern the ruins preservation and presentation.”<sup>58</sup> When a community decides to save a ruin it is deciding to save part of itself. This decision is often at first emotional, followed by determining the appropriate steps which need to be taken in order to save the ruin. It is the historical context that gives us the basis for a practical argument to save what we know emotionally to be important.

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<sup>55</sup> Arnold R. Alanen and Robert Z. Melnick, *Preserving Cultural Landscapes in America*, (Baltimore: The University of Johns Hopkins Press, 2000), ix.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

<sup>57</sup> Jackson, *The Necessity of Ruins*, 18.

<sup>58</sup> Gingsburg, *The Aesthetic of Ruins*, 107.

While our cultural landscapes generally tell us who we are as Americans, we make assumptions when we view them. It is the view that we treasure, giving it the term heritage landscape when it “contains buildings, sites and other features associated with history.”<sup>59</sup> It should be acknowledged that at times we assume that there is historical integrity in what we see; that they “look much as they did during a particular historical period.”<sup>60</sup> It is necessary to be cognizant of the possibility that this is not always true when determining the historical context of a cultural landscape.

Past use, historical context, and our emotional reactions all combine to determine the cultural value of a place. Cultural value contains the “identity value and emotive value based on recognition.”<sup>61</sup> Many people can occupy the same land, but the importance to specific groups can vary based on the use of the land and the value that group has for the land. There is identification with the land where past generations have lived or worked which in turns creates an emotional reaction in those viewing the landscape now. In the Hudson Valley, the castle on Bannerman’s Island is one of these places. Both Thomas Rinaldi and Tom Lewis recognize the place of the Bannerman Island Arsenal in the context of the Hudson River Valley. Lewis noted that “Francis Bannerman’s romantic creation had an impact on the valley’s community and culture,”<sup>62</sup> while Rinaldi, foreshadowing the recent collapses of the castle said, “But for the time being, Bannerman Island Arsenal remains as firmly entrenched as ever in the cultural landscape of the Hudson River Valley.”<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Alanen and Melnick, *Preserving Cultural Landscapes*, 45.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> John Ashurst and Asi Shalom, *Conservation of Ruins*, John Ashurst, ed. (New York: Elsevier Limited, 2007), 6.

<sup>62</sup> Lewis, *The Hudson*, 4.

<sup>63</sup> Monica Randall, *Phantoms of the Hudson Valley: The Glorious Estates of a Lost Era*, (Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press: 1995), 178.

The castle on Bannerman's Island is the part of the island and the structure that is most recognizable. This is what one sees as they take the train up the river from New York City or view as they pass by in a boat. It has been photographed for inclusion in books on ruins and for the cover of the 1954 NY Central Rail Road annual timetable. It is the view, or vista, that is protected in the heritage and cultural landscape. This vista is important enough to be acknowledged by New York; the Hudson Highlands is located within a Scenic Area of Statewide Significance.<sup>64</sup> The cultural landscape is supposed to include "an image sufficiently large to be readily recognized."<sup>65</sup> With the collapse of part of the tallest and most visually defining element of the tower and arsenals due to neglect we are losing a significant piece of the Hudson Valley's cultural heritage, the part of the view that is most easily recognizable. Neil Larson, who wrote the National Register nomination which included Bannerman's Island, recently described its role as "a picturesque ruin that is a prominent feature in the northern gateway to the Hudson Highlands, which is one of the most compelling vistas in the United States."<sup>66</sup> The collapsing tower is a physical reminder that parts of what is expected to be seen as one looks out over the Hudson River are disappearing from view permanently.

### **Ruins in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

Although an interest in ruins goes back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century when scholars, writers and artists examined and recorded Roman ruins, it is in the 17<sup>th</sup> century that

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<sup>64</sup> New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, "Overview," Clarence Fahnestock Memorial and Hudson Highlands State Parks Draft. Master Plan And Draft. Environmental Impact Statement Public Information Meeting, (Albany: 2009), 3, <http://NewYorkparks.state.ny.us/inside-our-agency/documents/HudsonHighlandsInformationMeetingPacket.pdf>.

<sup>65</sup> Alanen and Melnick, *Preserving Cultural Landscapes*, 47.

<sup>66</sup> Neil Larson, questionnaire by author, March 1, 2010.

ruins became the focus of western art, especially in Europe. During this romantic age in literature and art interest in ruins was high, and some individuals even built follies to resemble ruins. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Victorians idolized the past, resulting in revival architecture that took many different forms including Gothic Revival, Tudor Revival and in America, Colonial Revival. William Morris decried revivals and proposed that relics and remains were to be left alone. John Ruskin expressed a desire to actually return to the middle ages. His attitude towards ruins was an enjoyment of them up to a certain point, but when they became too weathered he felt they lost their beauty.<sup>67</sup> For both Morris and Ruskin ruins were something that should occur over a great length of time, America's desire to replicate the ruins of Europe was met with derision. Even so, artists like Thomas Cole went to Europe to look for ruins and wrote about America's lack of ruins in one of his essays, encouraging the mystique and creation of ruin follies in America.

In America, there was ambivalence between the desire for ruins and contempt toward Europe for having ruins. Historian David Lowenthal notes that "Americans who linked institutional decay with old age also viewed Europe's ivy-clad monuments and ancient ruins as marks of evil reflecting Old World senility."<sup>68</sup> Thoreau wanted to destroy relics of the past but when Henry Ward Beecher saw Kenilworth Castle in England he wept. The everyday American complained that there were no "hoary relics, romantic crumbling ruins."<sup>69</sup> The American landscape was considered empty and new. While many Europeans saw America in the early 19<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> David Lowenthal, *The Past Is A Foreign Country*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 168.

<sup>68</sup> Lowenthal, *The Past Is A Foreign Country*, 110.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 114.

century as “an escape from the inevitable decay in Europe”<sup>70</sup> Goethe wrote a poem in 1827 titled “To the United States” in which he lamented that “You have no ruins.”<sup>71</sup>

### **The Place of Ruins in the Hudson Valley**

By the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Hudson River was a popular avenue of travel. The valley became known for its amazing vistas, attracting visitors from other countries and inspired the Hudson River School of Painting, the country’s first native art movement. Thomas Cole, Frederick Church and others painted spectacular wilderness views of the river and valley. Washington Irving was inspired to write about the region including tales of Ichabod Crane, the Headless Horseman and the rolling thunder of the mid-Hudson. Andrew Jackson Downing, a Hudson Valley local from Newburgh, contributed to this era of creativity with his landscape and architectural designs that embraced the picturesque. Tourists visited from Europe and found only one thing was lacking – ruins.

In reality, the Hudson River of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a river of commerce and transportation. Settlement of the valley had steadily grown with numerous brick and iron works located along the river. The artist and the businessman lived in the same valley but saw it through different eyes, and “every artistic writer who gazed on the valley wearing blinders was matched by an entrepreneur who looked on the same scene with the thought of capitalizing on its economic possibilities.”<sup>72</sup> Importantly, Francis Bannerman had the ability to merge these two viewpoints, the businessman and the romantic when he created his arsenal complex on Bannerman’s Island.

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<sup>70</sup> Drooker, *American Ruins*, 11.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid 10.

<sup>72</sup> Lewis, *The Hudson*, 223- 224.

Bannerman was a Scot who desired to create his own Scottish Castle on the island he purchased. Interestingly, Thoreau in his dislike for revival style buildings had gone so far as to say “...but there can be nothing more grotesque, more absurd, or more affected’ than for an ordinary American ‘who knows no more of the middle ages than they do of him, to erect for his family residence a gimcrack of a Gothic castle.’”<sup>73</sup> Bannerman went one better than this; he created a whole complex of buildings for his business and a residence, all resembling the Scottish castles of his homeland.

### **The Influence of Europe and the British Isles**

Francis Bannerman traveled frequently for his business. He was in Ireland in 1872 when he met his wife, Helen Boyle. He drew on the castles he saw on his travels to help design the many buildings on the island. One example is Threave Castle located on an island in the River Dee in Scotland, “adrift in time.”<sup>74</sup> Once a fortification for the Black Douglass Clan, all that remains is a tower, whose statuesque appearance, size and proportion are reminiscent of the tower Bannerman built, albeit Bannerman’s was much more decorated (Figure 16). Bannerman’s crenellated turrets resemble those of Windsor Castle.

There are also similarities between Bannerman’s Castle and Urquhart Castle, a 500 year old ruin located on the banks of Loch Ness. In *Conservation of Ruins*, Amanda White would describe this castle as preserved in the typical English way of ‘conserve as found.’<sup>75</sup> Urquhart Castle has been left to the elements with closely

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<sup>73</sup> Lowenthal, *Past Is A Foreign Country*, 111.

<sup>74</sup> Gingsburg, *The Aesthetic of Ruins*, 102.

<sup>75</sup> Amanda White, “Interpretation and display of ruins and sites, *Conservation of Ruins*, edited by John Ashurst, 247 – 263, (New York: Elsevier Limited, 2007), 250.

mowed grass leading up to remaining stonework. Set on the shores of a body of water one approaches either castle by passing by a moat and bridge. The towers for both rise up, drawing the eye. Behind the castles are the views of the hills, and to the side of the towers are additional buildings. It is ironic that Bannerman created a real life, living version of this vista which has now come to replicate it even more as a ruin. Gingsberg's description of Urquhart Castle in *The Aesthetics of Ruins* shows the similarities in the imagery both sites evoke (Figure 17):

This ruin is a landmark in its region, a high point along the Loch, a viewpoint upon the countryside, an organizer of the landscape. The Castle has magnetic properties, drawing us toward it through a charged field that has become firmly attached to the ruin-shape. The field is inconceivable without the ruin.<sup>76</sup>

Similarly, Bannerman's Castle is integrally linked to the Hudson Valley. In the New York State Inventory Form, Elise Barry, concludes that "Bannerman's Castle still stands in silent vigil at the gate to the Hudson Highlands."<sup>77</sup> Without Bannerman's Castle standing proudly in the middle of the Hudson, the landscape would appear empty, bereft of what has been seen there for the past century.

Bannerman was also influenced by castles in other countries. He used the photograph of a fortification in Antwerp, Belgium, to help with his design for Arsenal No. 3's west wall. The workers referred to the photograph while they worked on the structure and created a very similar look<sup>78</sup> (Figures 18 and 19).

Francis Bannerman was influenced by the different landscapes he visited and through them created his own version of a landscape containing a castle. Although he

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<sup>76</sup> Gingsburg, *The Aesthetic of Ruins*, 83.

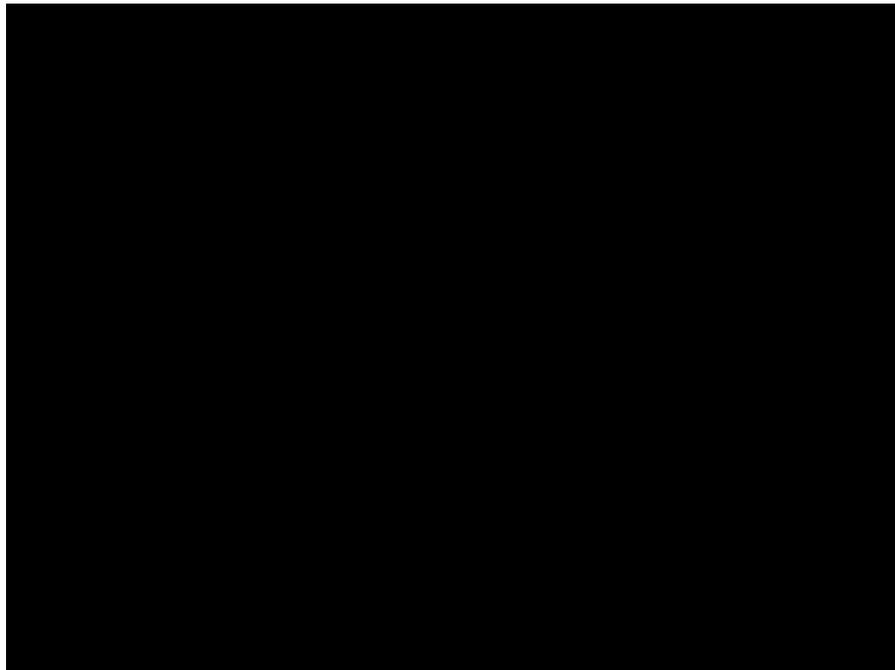
<sup>77</sup> *Building Inventory Form*, (Albany, NY: New York State Division for Historic Preservation, March 8, 1982), [http://www.oprhp.state.ny.us/hpimaging/hp\\_view.asp?GroupView=100168](http://www.oprhp.state.ny.us/hpimaging/hp_view.asp?GroupView=100168)

<sup>78</sup> Johnson and Gottlock, *Bannerman Castle*, 43.

built castles, not ruins, these buildings have become ruins and are now symbolic in the cultural landscape of the Hudson Valley. The cultural landscape evokes memories and can help bring communities together in the task to preserve a viewshed that is important to them. The viewshed containing the ruins at Bannerman's Island has become important to the residents of the Hudson Valley and has been given importance by authors, historians as well as recognition through placement on the National Register of Historic Places. Chapter 4 will examine the different treatment options seen available for ruins in general as well as observe how New York maintains the ruins in their jurisdiction. It will discuss the treatment of the ruins at Bannerman's Island since it became the property of New York in 1968.



**Figure 16: Threave Castle, Scotland, “Threave Castle,”***The Border Reivers*,  
[http://www.sorbie.net/border\\_reivers.htm](http://www.sorbie.net/border_reivers.htm)



**Figure 17: Urquhart Castle, Scotland, “Urquhart Castle,”***Schottland 2005*,  
[http://www.uflau.net/scotpage/castle/urquhart\\_castle14.html](http://www.uflau.net/scotpage/castle/urquhart_castle14.html)

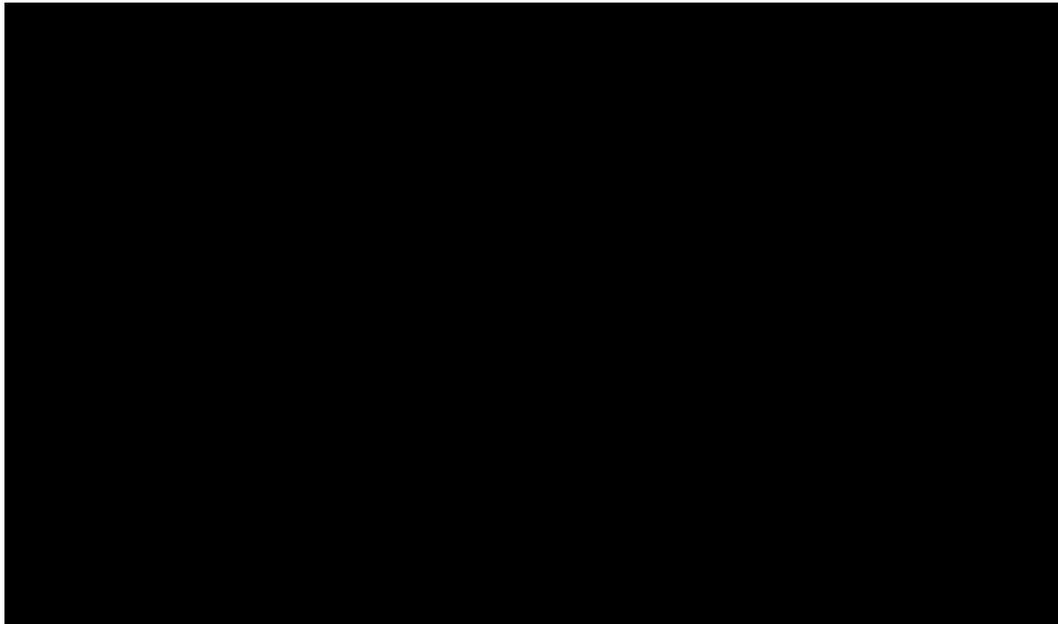


Figure 18: Sketch by Francis Bannerman for the West Wall of Arsenal No. 3. Thom Johnson and Barbara Gottlock, *Images of America: Bannerman Castle*, (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 43, from Hagley Museum and Library.

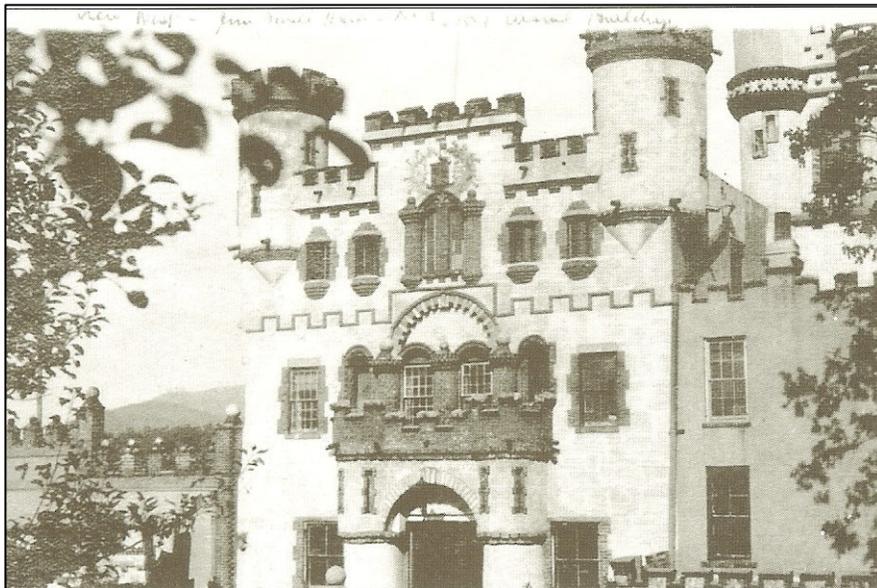


Figure 19: Fortification in Antwerp, Belgium that Bannerman used for his inspiration for the above drawing for Arsenal No. 3, Thom Johnson and Barbara Gottlock, *Images of America: Bannerman Castle*, (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 43. Used with permission.

## Chapter 4: The Treatment of Ruins

Robert Gingsburg tells us that the “ruin is in process.”<sup>79</sup> Many factors ultimately inform our choices of how to treat a ruin. Some of the choices Gingsburg gives us include excavation, stabilization, restoration, left to be a ruin or allowed to disappear.<sup>80</sup> The treatment options examined in this chapter consider these choices. Given the forces of nature most of these options seem to be man’s attempt to control nature. As Florence Hetzler tells us, “Ruins defy nature; but then nature comes in, and the ruining process cannot be stopped.”<sup>81</sup> Ruin treatment plans are our way of trying to slow down this process of decay. This chapter will present the terms and definitions used in the treatment of ruins. After an examination of the types of treatment plans that are available for ruins in general and how ruins are treated in New York State, specifically, I will discuss the treatment of the ruins at Bannerman’s Island since it became the property of New York in 1968.

### **Terms and Definitions**

In the United States, the National Park Service (NPS) has written a set of guidelines entitled *Ruins Stabilization in the Southwestern United States* which is based on the initial NPS ruins stabilization manual written in 1949 and revised in 1962. The guidelines given in *Ruins Stabilization in the Southwestern United States* remain valid for the majority of ruins no matter what their location and climate. While it has many common elements with the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Preservation, Restoration, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Historic*

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<sup>79</sup> Gingsburg, *The Aesthetic of Ruins*, 308.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Hetzler, “The Aesthetic of Ruins,” 105.

*Buildings, Ruins Stabilization in the Southwestern United States* includes stabilization and ruins stabilization, treatment options not found in the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards*. The need for stabilization must be considered when determining possible treatment plans for a ruin; for Bannerman's Island it is a primary option that must be explored.

Important definitions to consider when discussing approaches to preservation include:

- a) **historic structure:** considered to be a work of man, either prehistoric or historic, consciously created to serve some form of human activity.
- b) **preservation:** used architecturally, refers to the stabilization of a structure in its existing form by preventing further change or deterioration.
- c) **restoration:** the process of accurately recovering, by removal of later work and the replacement of missing original work, the form and details of a structure or part of a structure, together with its setting, as it appeared at some period in time.
- d) **reconstruction:** the re-creation of a building by new construction.
- e) **stabilization:** those construction methods, materials, and techniques used to minimize the deterioration of a structure, thereby accomplishing the objective of preservation
- f) **ruins stabilization:** Ruins on unexcavated sites should be stabilized only to that extent which is necessary to preserve them for further investigation.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> United States National Park Service, "Ruins Stabilization in the Southwestern United States", *Publications in Archeology 10*, (Washington, DC: United States National Park Service: 2007), [http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online\\_books/archeology/10/chap1.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/archeology/10/chap1.htm)

Structures fail for numerous reasons, both human and natural. Human causes include fire, quarrying, neglect, mistreatment of structural members, vandalism, war, and design inadequacies, while natural causes include rain or water, ground movements, thermal stress or frost, vegetation/root damage, rodent activity and wind erosion.<sup>83</sup> To determine the specific causes of structural failure a condition assessment of the property must be undertaken. This assessment must be done in a methodical manner that includes both quantitative and qualitative methods and include studying, documenting, and diagnosing the ruin.<sup>84</sup> Once this assessment occurs a treatment plan for the ruin can be considered. An assessment of the residence on Bannerman's Island was completed in 2008. An assessment of the arsenal and tower has not been undertaken.

### **The Beginnings of Preservation**

Viollet-le-Duc became Inspector of Historic Monuments under Louis Napoleon III in 1853. Le-Duc believed that proper restoration could never truly occur and that buildings should be taken back to their original, or "best" construction. At this same time, private organizations in England were trying to protect their monuments, but leaders like John Ruskin and William Morris called for a conservative, hands-off approach. In 1877, Morris led the Society for the Protection of Antique Buildings, a group which promoted the protection, but not restoration, of antique buildings. Arresting decay was acceptable, but restoring was not. As

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<sup>83</sup> Chris How, "Stability and Survival," *Conservation of Ruins*, edited by John Ashurst, 11 - 43, (New York: Elsevier Limited, 2007), 11-12.

<sup>84</sup> Frank G. Matero, "The Conservation of Immovable Cultural Property: Ethical and Practical Dilemmas, *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation*, Vol. 32, No. 1, Spring 1993, 17.

described by Ruskin in his *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, restoration was a form of destruction.

Le-Duc's would find it acceptable to rebuild and restore the buildings on Bannerman's Island, correcting Bannerman's mistakes by using better quality materials and techniques and by simply performing routine maintenance, which was not undertaken during the Bannerman's ownership. Ruskin would argue that the buildings should be allowed to return to nature, especially given the manner in which they were constructed. Ruskin thought buildings should be created to last, "ephemeral materials, he warned, invited careless craftsmanship."<sup>85</sup> The combination of their current ruinous state, along with their construction methods and materials would cause Ruskin to argue for allowing the buildings to retain their look of a romantic ruin.

This discussion of restoration versus allowing buildings to return to nature continues today as preservationists examine ruins, looking at the historical context to determine the period of significance. The buildings on Bannerman's Island are historically significant and would be eligible independently for placement on the National Register, as was discussed in Chapter 2. This information affects the type of treatment and maintenance choices of all ruins, including Bannerman's. The need and desire to save structures is created through the context and significance in the cultural landscape, in terms of value to the local people or to those who study the history of war and commerce. A decision needs to be made on a treatment option for Bannerman's Island.

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<sup>85</sup> Lowenthal, *The Past Is A Foreign Country*, 398.

## Stabilization and Ruins Stabilization

Stabilization revolves around the concept of applying “the minimum treatment needed to keep the ruin.”<sup>86</sup> Ideally the act of stabilization would prevent the ruin from further disintegration and can occur using either internal and/or external supports.<sup>87</sup> During the stabilization process it is permissible to patch portions of the structure as needed with materials that approximate the original materials, realign walls to return them to plumb or change their existing alignment, and replace or reset original parts or elements back into their original location which can include resetting part of a fallen wall. How a ruin will be viewed by the public will impact the type of stabilization chosen. It should not negatively impact the interaction and experience the visitor has with the ruin (Figure 20). The Venice Charter addresses ruins stabilization in the excavations section, and NPS utilizes this definition in determining the application of ruins stabilization. The charter states,

All reconstruction work should however be ruled out "a priori". Only anastylosis, that is to say, the reassembling of existing but dismembered parts can be permitted. The material used for integration should always be recognizable and its use should be the least that will ensure the conservation of a monument and the reinstatement of its form.<sup>88</sup>

The premise behind this decision is to allow work to be done that will “facilitate the understanding of the monument and to reveal it without ever distorting its meaning.”<sup>89</sup>

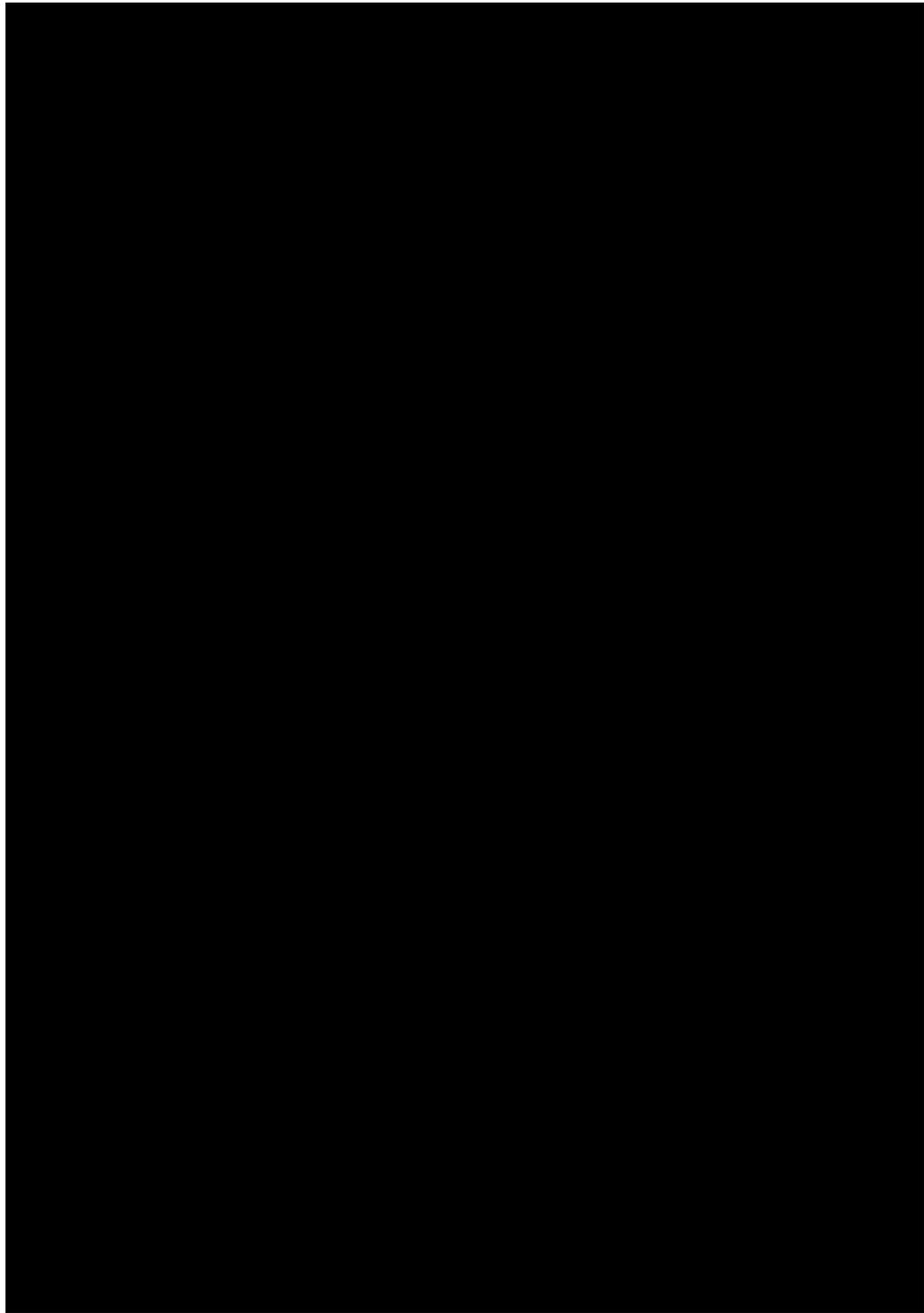
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<sup>86</sup> Gingsburg, *The Aesthetic of Ruins*, 306.

<sup>87</sup> United States National Park Service, “Ruins Stabilization in the Southwestern United States”, *Publications in Archeology 10*, [http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online\\_books/archeology/10/chap1.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/archeology/10/chap1.htm)

<sup>88</sup> ICOMOS, International Charter For The Conservation And Restoration Of Monuments And Sites (*The Venice Charter- 1964*), [http://www.international.icomos.org/charters/venice\\_e.htm](http://www.international.icomos.org/charters/venice_e.htm).

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 20: Stabilization of Klive Chantry in Somerset, UK is at risk for further deterioration and needed further stabilization until further investigation could occur. Shown is an applied restraint of the gable wall. Chris How, "Stability and Survival," *Conservation of Ruins*, edited by John Ashurst, 11 - 43, (New York: Elsevier Limited, 2007), 11.**

## Restoration

Restoration specifically involves the attempt to “restore the structure to its complete, in-use appearance.”<sup>90</sup> New replacement parts, however, must be distinguishable from the original elements. While stabilization involves an invasive procedure such as shoring up walls or replacing fallen beams, the look of the ruin remains a ruin. Choosing to restore a ruin is a more ambitious undertaking and comes with more emotional and ethical issues. In *Conservation of Ruins*, Gionata Rizzi poses the question “Is it good to restore a ruin?” and answers that a “ruin cannot be restored” given the lack of original finishes, details and colours (sic). She feels that the appearance is artificial and unreal.<sup>91</sup> She also notes that “the more a ruin is restored, the more it loses its authenticity; the more the evocative power is diluted, the more its archeological truth is blurred.”<sup>92</sup> This concurs with Hetzler’s view that once a ruin is restored it becomes a ‘ruined ruin.’<sup>93</sup> Other possible problems include potentially inaccurate interpretation, a restoration to a specific period in time which can be just one point in the history of the structure, and a distortion or structural damage to the ruin and potential archeological loss.<sup>94</sup> Restoration always comes with some compromises. Decisions need to be made to what period of significance will be reflected in the restoration. Can the same materials be used, and if not will it affect the appearance and interaction of visitors with the structure? This is especially true of ruins as our view of them is as a ruin. By restoring them we have completely changed

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<sup>90</sup> Gingsburg, “*The Aesthetic of Ruins*,” 306.

<sup>91</sup> Gionata Rizzi, “Preface,” *Conservation of Ruins*, edited by John Ashurst, xix - xxiii, (New York: Elsevier Limited, 2007), xxi.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Hetzler, “Causality: Ruin Time and Ruins,” 52.

<sup>94</sup> White, “ Interpretation and display of ruins,” 250.

they way they look, their function in the site and their interaction with both nature and the visitor. The experience is now completely changed.

Amanda White notes the benefits of restoration can include a greater and improved access or views to the site as well as an appreciation for the original spatial qualities of the site. These benefits are determined by the desired interaction for the visitor. If the intention is to demonstrate a lost culture or piece of history, restoration may be a desired choice which would present a “clear and informative message to visitors.”<sup>95</sup> The caveat to these benefits is that the work must be performed accurately, which depends on the “extent to which the original design or appearance at a previous date is known, or can be established.”<sup>96</sup> To ensure accurate interpretation of the site, archeology and other research must be performed and analyzed before restoration work begins.

### **Additional Choices**

In England the approach to ruins for the past 70 years has been to ‘conserve as found.’<sup>97</sup> The aim is to preserve sites by revealing as much original material as possible and then freezing the masonry at this point. These ruins are then set off with closely mown grass and pathways, to showcase them most effectively. The approach has been replicated elsewhere in the world and is still a viable option.<sup>98</sup>

Other treatment options include deliberate ruination, the verdant approach, managed decline, and benign neglect. Some of these approaches are used in the United States even though they are not specifically addressed in the NPS *Ruins*

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<sup>95</sup>White, “Interpretation and display of ruins,” 250.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, 252.

*Stabilization* publication. The common element in all these options is the inevitable loss of the ruin.

Deliberate ruination is also referred to as planned ruination. It came into being in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and involves buildings that seem to have come to the end of their natural use. After recording these structures and removing any salvageable materials, the roofs were removed, allowing nature to take its course.

The verdant approach has one principle objective to “preserve, if not enhance the natural and fragile ecology of the monument and its surroundings.”<sup>99</sup> This rare approach takes into consideration that not all plants are destructive, some are benign and some plants might even be protective. It is accomplished with an “absolute minimum of fabric conservation, sufficient to make the monument safe and to slow its rate of deterioration.”<sup>100</sup> Only destructive woody plants are removed with careful consideration given to the view and structure as well as the ecology of the site. This approach comes with certain challenges that can result from unexpected consequences of plant removal but current users believe the benefits outweigh the drawbacks. The removal of certain plants that were protecting specific elements of the ruin can cause those elements to be exposed to weather and deterioration. However, the ability to actually see and experience what was previously an overgrown site can outweigh the consequences of plant removal.

A third approach is managed decline, which can be controversial, as it “allows a ruin to safely follow its natural path to destruction.”<sup>101</sup> After an archeological

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<sup>99</sup> White, “Interpretation and display of ruins,” 250.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 254.

<sup>101</sup> White, “Interpretation and display of ruins,” 254.

recording is done, vegetation is controlled and fabric likely to collapse is removed. It is noted that this choice is often made for economic reasons.

Benign neglect is an approach which is between planned ruination and managed decline. Although the sites are not actively stripped of their components, nothing is done to prevent the natural destruction by nature. The end result is the loss of the ruin.

### **New York State - Treatment of Ruins**

Ruins in the New York Park system are handled in many different ways.<sup>102</sup> Structures are examined and their current or potential use dictates how they are managed. The determination is based on the role of interpretation as well as whether the ruin is of primary or secondary significance to the overall site. When there is no interpretation, as has been the case at Bannerman's Island until 2004, there is often little or no preservation work undertaken.

Some ruins such as Fort Crown Point, a fortification used by French, British and Americans in the 1700's, are interpretive sites and are aggressively maintained in keeping with England's "conserve as found" approach. Crown Point was a well built site with thick masonry walls. It has been repointed and had the walls capped (Figure 21). Other sites in New York State, such as the Alleghany State Park which contains a Works Progress Administration (WPA) site, is kept clean but has not received preservation work. This site contains the ruin of a nature museum, a stone staircase and contains concrete pits within an open structure. This style incorporates the elements of managed decline approach.

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<sup>102</sup> Julian Adams, phone conversation with the author, February 8, 2010.

## **Treatment of Bannerman's Island**

New York has performed no routine maintenance on Bannerman's Island until the BCT began their work as a friends group in 1998. The general approach for Bannerman's Island has been one of benign neglect, in which the structures were left exposed to the elements, and eventual loss was inevitable. Since the BCT has become involved paths have been reopened, and although a 'conserve as found' approach has not been completely implemented at this time, the site is on its way to being tamed (Figure 22).

Unfortunately, the buildings in the tower and arsenal complex have had no work done on them at all; nor has there been an official evaluation and assessment. As a result of this 'benign neglect,' large portions of the iconic castle collapsed during the winter of 2009 – 2010. Although stabilization of the castle ruin has been desired since the inception of the BCT, the recent collapse makes it unclear if stabilization will be possible if funding is found or if the remains are too unstable to allow work to safely occur. It is also important to bear in mind that "not all buildings were well conceived and during investigations the quirks of individual builders surface on a regular basis."<sup>103</sup> As noted in Chapter 2, Bannerman acted as his own architect, used inferior materials and employed problematic structural designs making stabilization more difficult (Figures 23 and 24).

## **Maintenance**

In determining what approach to take with ruins, it is important to keep in mind that once a ruin has been treated, it enters into a maintenance cycle, which never

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<sup>103</sup> Chris How, "Stability and Survival," *Conservation of Ruins*, edited by John Ashurst, 11 - 43, (New York: Elsevier Limited, 2007), 11.

ends. Maintaining the site in a way that is safe for visitors is extremely important but must never be accomplished in lieu of the integrity of the ruin. The ruin must always remain the primary concern. Ruins that are open to the public face specific issues, besides visitor safety, and include creating a sustainable balance between tourism and treatment of the site. The appeal of the site and the expectations of visitors are inextricably linked, leading to the need for visitor management strategies that allow for the maximum positive benefits for the visitor while mitigating the negative aspects of the site.<sup>104</sup>

Sites that are closed to the public, or are accessible in a limited manner can face the additional challenge of dealing with unwanted visitors and vandalism. At times the allure of the ruin is its very inaccessibility. In today's internet world it is possible to view trespassing visitors on website such as "Sucka Pants."<sup>105</sup> The main page shows people illegally inside the ruins on Bannerman's Island. Creating an environment that prevents this type of illegal access is part of the decision making dynamic.

While this chapter has examined the many choices available along with philosophical impact surrounding these choices, the true determining factor often comes down to economics. Chapter 5 will examine the power of money in determining treatment options. The impact of the current recession will also be addressed as our states and our nation face record budget shortfalls and attempt to balance their budgets.

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<sup>104</sup> White, "Interpretation and display of ruins," 247.

<sup>105</sup> Sucka Pants, "Your failure is integral part of the story," <http://suckapants.com/2008/10/your-failure-is-integral-part-of-story.html>



**Figure 21: New York State Crown Point ruins. Photograph via New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.**



**Figure 22: Approaching residence from the arsenal complex, July5, 2009, photograph by author.**



**Figure 23: The Castle post December 2009 collapse. Photograph by Linda Hubbard.**



**Figure 24: The Castle on January 27, 2010 after second collapse. Photograph by Thom Johnson. Used with permission.**

## Chapter 5: The Power of Money

Every preservation decision is affected by economics; funding impacts almost every aspect of preservation. Cost-benefit analysis assigns a value to the different aspects of a project, with the costs assessed against the benefits. The act of putting a dollar value on a memory or the iconic place of a ruin in the landscape is difficult and subjective. One new facet of the cost-benefit analysis is the issue of sustainability. Governments have begun to mandate the inclusion of sustainable products and methods during construction which increases the costs of preservation. Most costs have a specific value and are tangible while the value awarded to the intangibles, such as preservation and sustainability do not. This chapter will examine the repercussions of cost-benefit analysis and examine the potential funding and costs of different preservation choices for Bannerman's Island.

### **Economics and Heritage Tourism**

The field of preservation is increasingly faced with the need to put a price tag on a memory, a ruin or historic building. Preservationists are often seen as those who want to save everything regardless of cost, while others seem ready to tear down everything. These issues of preservation economics are even clearer when a country is in a recession and program dollars are being cut. Regardless of current economic conditions, certain factors apply when making a decision in how to spend preservation dollars. This decision “varies with the durability or evanescence of everything around us; with changing needs for permanence and for novelty, and with

economic, cultural and aesthetic costs and benefits.”<sup>106</sup> David Lowenthal reminds us that “a relic’s worth depends on its state of repair, on who owns and looks after it, and on what use it serves.”<sup>107</sup> The justification for spending preservation dollars is easier when it is directed towards a frequently used building or a more traditional structure such as a house museum. The decision to restore a ruin sitting on an island and open to the public only a few weekends a year is clearly open to challenge. But even if we prohibit tourists from the island and simply return to tours around the island, there needs to be a structure to view. Our dilemma is in determining the value of Bannerman’s Castle. What is the worth of an iconic piece of history that keeps company with the Old Governor’s Mansion in Barboursville, Virginia built in 1822 or Fort Union in New Mexico? The dilemma is compounded by the New York’s budget woes and the current plan to cut funding to places like Washington’s Headquarters, located across the river from Bannerman’s. Sites like Washington’s Headquarters compete directly for tourist dollars as well as budget dollars. The legacy we leave for the next generation will be determined by which structures receive funding and which will not. If no funding is spent on Bannerman’s, if it receives no work, there will soon be no castle to view.

A discussion about economics and preservation often includes heritage tourism. It is a growing portion of our economy but David Lowenthal states that “only a small fraction of what is preserved pays for itself through tourism.”<sup>108</sup> Additionally, as pointed out in *Conservation of Ruins*, neglected sites have no

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<sup>106</sup> Lowenthal, *The Past Is A Foreign Country*, 400.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> David Lowenthal, “Material Preservation and Its Alternatives,” *Perspecta*, Vol. 25, 1989, 70.

capacity to generate income.<sup>109</sup> The Hudson Valley is home to some of the finest heritage tourism sites in the United States including Washington's Headquarters, Clermont, Wilderstein, Olana, and Lyndhurst. The issue of being able to support oneself, without government aid is of such importance it was the topic of a session at the 2009 National Trust for Historic Preservation National Conference.<sup>110</sup> The speakers at this session used the sites they managed as case studies to demonstrate ways to create a profitable bottom line. Other nongovernment sources of funding can come from private endowments, gifts, renting the space for events like weddings and gift shops. Greg Sokaris, the Executive Director of Wilderstein in Rhinebeck, NY states that "being able to raise sufficient funding to restore, maintain and operate [a heritage tourism site] is by far the greatest challenge ...for an organization to succeed."<sup>111</sup>

### **Budget Constraints**

At the present time, the United States is in a major recession that presents further challenges to preservation sites throughout the United States. Appropriation for the FY 2010 budget for Save America's Treasures program is \$24.5 million.<sup>112</sup> In the proposed FY 2011 budget, funding for historic preservation has been cut by almost 27% to \$29.5 million, and specifically the programs Save America's Treasures and Preserve America have zero dollars budgeted.<sup>113</sup> There is always a cost-benefit ratio that must be calculated in any project and in preservation there is an "uneasy

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<sup>109</sup> White, "Interpretation and display of ruins," 248.

<sup>110</sup> National Trust For Historic Preservation, "For Profit Nonprofits," *Nashville Sustaining the Future in Harmony With Our Pasts, 2009 National Preservation Conference, Final Program*, 19.

<sup>111</sup> Greg Sokaris, questionnaire by author, January 13, 2010.

<sup>112</sup> Lee White, "Cuts Proposed for History-Related Programs in Federal Budget for Fiscal 2011," *Perspectives in History*, March 2010, American Historical Association, <http://www.historians.org/Perspectives/issues/2010/1003/1003nch1.cfm>

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

truth that few treatments are forever and all require continue cyclical maintenance.”<sup>114</sup> With continued care comes continued costs and preservationists must choose their battles. Even in years without a recession funding for preservation projects will always compete for federal funding which might be spent for education, the military, healthcare or social security.

At the state level, the 2008 – 2009 Fiscal Year Budget Recommendations for New York note that “the State Park System is suffering from decades of under investment with the result that the parks recreational facilities and infrastructure are stretched to the breaking point.”<sup>115</sup> In 2008, NYSOPRHP determined that the single largest challenge it faced was its “need to significantly increase [the] capital budget to address the rehabilitation and reconstruction of aging infrastructure across the state park system.”<sup>116</sup> For each project, other economic impacts come in the costs of wear and tear, cyclical maintenance, damage and deterioration to a site.

New York State has allotted only \$32 million in their budget for the fiscal year 2010 – 2011 for the Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation compared to \$110 million in 2008 – 2009.<sup>117</sup> In an effort to balance the state budget, it has proposed to close “53 state parks, in addition to the initial 55 proposed by the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. Operations would be scaled back at another 23 locations.”<sup>118</sup> Sites such as the newly restored Walkway Over the Hudson, which has been a role model touted by the BCT as an example of the

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<sup>114</sup> Frank G. Matero, “The Conservation of Immovable Cultural Property: Ethical and Practical Dilemmas, *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation*, Vol. 32, No. 1, Spring 1993, 19.

<sup>115</sup> New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, 2007 Annual Report , <http://NewYorkparks.state.ny.us/state-council/documents/StateCouncilAnnualReport.pdf>, 7.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

<sup>117</sup> Christian Livermore, “The Cost of Saving History, Sites languish without funding,” *Times Herald Record*, February 28, 2010, 6.

<sup>118</sup> John Sullivan, “Minnewaska fans organize,” *Times Herald Record*, March 8, 2010, 3.

heritage tourism dollars that restoration can bring to the Hudson Valley, will be closed from December to March and Washington's Headquarters, the first publicly owned historic site in the United States will be closed permanently.<sup>119</sup> Also at risk are the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) grants, such as the grant for Bannerman's Island; \$5million from the EPF is proposed to be used for operating expenses to keep certain sites, such as the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor open.

### **Another New York State Example**

The treatment of Bannerman's Island by New York State is not an isolated incident. Roosevelt Island near New York City contained a smallpox hospital designed by architect James Renwick, Jr. who designed St. Patrick's Cathedral in NYC. Roosevelt Island is considered New York City's "most romantic ruin."<sup>120</sup> Like Bannerman's Island it is owned by New York State and has not received routine maintenance. Preservationists have been trying to stabilize the smallpox hospital for a number of years and in January of 2008 a partial façade collapse occurred. Julian Adams of NYSOPRHP commented in a telephone conversation that Roosevelt Island has had occasional stabilization over the years but never with New York money; all funding has come from outside grants. Stabilization has occurred in a piecemeal manner which causes non-stabilized areas to fail.

### **Sustainability: Definition and Application**

Sustainability is an important aspect in the economic discussion of appropriate treatment for ruins. Sustainability is a priority for New York State and a

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<sup>119</sup> Michael Randall, "More parks, sites could be at risk," *Times Herald Record*, February 28, 2010, 43.

<sup>120</sup> David Dunlap, "A Roosevelt Island Ruin Sinks Further into Decay," *The New York Times*, (N.Y. Region, January 5, 2008), [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/05/nyregion/05asylum.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/05/nyregion/05asylum.html?_r=1).

“sustainability planning process was initiated in 2007.”<sup>121</sup> The NYSORPHP

Sustainability Plan defines the term as

...a commitment to reducing consumption of energy and raw materials and a commitment to planning, designing, maintaining and managing OPRHP facilities based on the need to protect cultural and natural resources.<sup>122</sup>

The 2008 plan mandates the incorporation of sustainable design into “all facets of planning, designing, building, operating and maintaining facilities.”<sup>123</sup> It also states that a “holistic, integrated systems approach to designing and constructing buildings and managing landscapes to optimize resource use and minimize impact to the natural environment”<sup>124</sup> will be followed.

These mandates will have an impact on the level of preservation for Bannerman’s Island as the island has no power and no running water. Portable toilets are located on the docks for use by island personnel and tourists. BCT plans call for an eventual full-time caretaker on the island who will live in the restored residence. It will be problematic to incorporate NYSOPRHP’s sustainability mandates with the needed work that must be accomplished to make the island habitable. The NYSOPRHP Sustainability Plan suggests using renewable energy generation at state parks. Research would need to be done to see if solar, wind, geothermal, or hydropower would be possibilities for the island. Large machinery and all building supplies must be transported to the island; in a time when New York State is trying to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and fleet costs, the costs to transport materials to

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<sup>121</sup> New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, New York State Sustainability Plan, April 22, 2009, 3.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid,12.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

the island will be considerable, both in terms of dollars and amount of greenhouse emissions generated.

### **The Cost to Stabilize Bannerman's Island**

As one member of over 130 parks in the New York State park system, Bannerman's Island is in competition with many other sites for funding. Part of New York State plans to balance the budget includes taking \$5 million from the state's EPF to prevent additional closures and cutbacks of other state parks.<sup>125</sup> Bannerman Castle Trust has pursued grants and funding for over 10 years for work on the island and has currently received a matching EPF Challenge Grant of \$350,000 which will be used to stabilize the residence. According to BCT member Barbara Gottlock, the \$700,000 will be used for the first phase of stabilization to the residence including a new roof, a floor and new windows with security shutters. Masonry work on the residence will be completed through a gift of \$50,000.

NY Senator Charles Schumar has asked Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, to consider Bannerman Island for a Save America's Treasures grant<sup>126</sup> but it is unlikely they will receive the grant given the current proposed zero dollar appropriations for the US budget for FY 2011. BCT president, Neil Caplan, has nominated Bannerman's Castle to the National Trust for Historic Preservation List of 11 Most Endangered Places, a yearly list which notes the sites more likely to be lost in the coming year. In this way the BCT hopes to highlight the need for funding to save this iconic treasure of the cultural landscape of the Hudson River Valley.

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<sup>125</sup> Randall, "More parks, sites could be at risk," 43.

<sup>126</sup> Bannerman Castle Trust, Inc., "Help us save Bannerman Castle," <http://www.bannermancastle.org/news.html#concert>.

The recent collapse will have impacts on tours of the island. Current trails pass close to the tower and new trails will need to be created leading to the residence for the summer tourist session. Both BCT founder Neil Caplan and Julian Adams of NYSOPRHP estimate the cost of stabilizing the arsenals is approximately \$20 million.<sup>127</sup> Newspaper accounts chronicling the current budget problems in New York State note that BCT is requesting \$5.5 million to stabilize the remains of the tower and arsenal complex since the collapse, while acknowledging costs could raise once an on-site visit occurs.<sup>128</sup> An on-site visit by BCT members occurred in late March but an official visit had not occurred. Although fundraising is ongoing for the BCT, there does not appear to be any type of grant or funding available to undertake the considerable costs of stabilizing the arsenals.

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<sup>127</sup> Michael Randall, "Old castledown, but not out," *Times Herald Record*, 3.

<sup>128</sup> Christian Livermore, "The Cost of Saving History, Sites languish without funding," *Times Herald Record*, February 28, 2010, 6.

## Chapter 6: Recommendations and Conclusion

In December 2009, residents of the Hudson Valley awoke to learn that a portion of the iconic castle located on Bannerman's Island had collapsed; a second collapse occurred two weeks later. Suddenly, a touchstone for the Hudson Valley became vulnerable, proof that what many had warned of for years was really happening; the castle was not going to last forever without some type of intervention. Treatment of Bannerman's Castle has long been a source of disagreement; there are those who sought to save it and those who believe it is best to let nature take its course. New York took possession of the island with the intent of letting the buildings on the island succumb to nature, without intervening.

As David Lowenthal stated "nothing lasts forever, however faithfully protected, everything always departs more and more from its original state."<sup>129</sup> Preservationists regularly face the task of determining how best to spend what limited funding is available in a way that will do the most good, particularly in hard economic times. Bannerman's Island is a case in point. It will require a large amount of funding to complete the wish list of BCT; they have asked New York State for \$5.5 million for immediate stabilization. In light of the current collapse, the focus needs to shift from restoration of the residence to the immediate stabilization of the arsenals and tower. These are the most highly recognized of the buildings of the island and without them; there will be little to draw visitors to the island.

Bannerman's Island was not afforded protection during the ownership of the Bannerman family; most buildings were left open to the elements and not repaired

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<sup>129</sup> Lowenthal, "Material Preservation," 68.

when damaged by the powder house explosion. Additionally, it was not afforded any type of protection during the 40-plus years it has been owned by New York. As David Lowenthal has observed “a relic’s worth depends on its state of repair, on who owns and looks after it, and on what use it serves.”<sup>130</sup> This is the crux of the decision facing Bannerman’s Island and its structures. This chapter will look at viable treatment options and their potential impact through economics, cultural landscape and historic considerations.

### **Treatment Options**

The past treatment of Bannerman’s Island has been one of benign neglect. The current focus by BCT is to obtain funding that will allow for the restoration of the family residence, with no specific plans in place to address the needs of the arsenal and tower complex. The current plan of action must change given the recent collapse. While a significant portion of the tower has been lost, the potential for further collapse has increased.

Many treatment options were discussed in Chapter 4. A number of them, while possible for Bannerman’s Island, would not be the best choices to undertake; excluded choices are deliberate ruination, verdant approach and restoration. Potential options such as preservation and reconstruction should also be omitted from the list.

At the current time, the family residence must take a back seat to the more pressing needs of “the Castle.” Additionally, the choice to fund a restoration of the residence is not economically sound given the current economy. Since a HSR has been performed, stabilization work could be implemented in the future if

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<sup>130</sup> Lowenthal, *The Past Is A Foreign Country*, 400.

circumstances and funding permit or by using the current restoration funding if possible.

Therefore, the arsenal complex of Bannerman's Island has the following viable options which should be considered: stabilization, ruins stabilization, managed decline, and benign neglect.

### **Considering the Options**

Writing in *Conservation of Ruins*, Ashurst recommends that stabilization of ruins "limit engineering interference as far as possible, to measures consistent with the historical context and original construction methods."<sup>131</sup> While stabilization of the ruins appears to be of primary importance, construction techniques of the buildings must be taken into consideration. Although a HSR has not been undertaken on any buildings except the residence, all buildings on the island were constructed in a manner similar to the residence. Therefore it is reasonable to draw parallels between construction techniques and materials used for the arsenal complex buildings and the residence until an HSR is completed on the other buildings.

As described in the HSR, completed in 2008, the building materials of the residence were "diverse and eclectic," and include "the use of recycled materials including Belgian block for decorative trim and railroad ties and bed frames for structural support [which] can be seen throughout the structure."<sup>132</sup> Additional materials include "locally supplied bricks, field mixed concrete and stucco...often of inferior quality and performance."<sup>133</sup> It should be noted that records indicate that portions of the arsenal walls were constructed of the rubble stone that was removed

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<sup>131</sup> John Ashurst, *Conservation of Ruins*, (New York: Elsevier Limited, 2007), 11.

<sup>132</sup> Jan Hird Pokorny Associates, Inc., "Craig Inch Lodge," 9.

<sup>133</sup> Jan Hird Pokorny Associates, Inc., "Craig Inch Lodge," 9.

for the island to create the necessary grade for building. Replicating the construction materials and techniques employed by Bannerman would be counter-productive and recreate a building constructed with inferior quality materials.

Managed decline and benign neglect are both viable options for Bannerman's Island but would do nothing to prevent the eventual loss of the structures. Stabilization occurs to "minimize the deterioration of a structure, thereby accomplishing the objective of preservation." Given the label of "Premier Ruin of the Hudson" and descriptions such as gateway to the Hudson Highlands or compelling vista, the need to save these structures is imperative; some form of stabilization is urgently needed. It is clear that stabilization is the best choice of the many treatment options.

### **Economics**

As discussed in Chapter 5, the current economic situation for preservation is dire. Privately-and publically-owned sites are all competing for the limited funding currently available. In New York, large portions of many of the parks are being closed including beaches at campgrounds, which are accessible to large portions of the general population every day of the week.<sup>134</sup> Bannerman's Island has limited potential for income based on its current schedule of operation, which are weekends from May to October, weather permitting. The island can only handle a certain number of visitors at one time, which is constrained by the available number of hard hats, a New York State requirement for all who are on the island. The author toured the island in July 2005, and there were a large number of groups which were

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<sup>134</sup> New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, "State Parks and Historic Sites Closing List," February 18, 2010, 4  
[http://www.ptny.org/pdfs/Press%20Release/advocacy\\_press/Park\\_Closures\\_leg\\_list.pdf](http://www.ptny.org/pdfs/Press%20Release/advocacy_press/Park_Closures_leg_list.pdf).

constantly intersecting each other. Some groups were not wearing hard hats as there were not enough available. The quality of the tour was compromised due to the very number of tourists on the island that day.

Before the island was opened to the public, boat tours were available, allowing tourists to view the island from a fairly close vantage point. Boat tours allow for more tourists to view the island and would not need to be limited to weekends. Inclement weather would not be as large of a concern since only severe weather would prevent tours from operating. Stabilization options would be increased if consideration of close viewing by the public did not need to be considered. Additionally, the BCT has an observation deck in place, located on the east shore of the Hudson River, which allows a close up view of the castle through the use of binoculars. Both of these options are affordable ways to view Bannerman's Island without incurring large restoration, operating or maintenance costs.

### **Cultural Landscape**

The significance of these buildings is not disputed. The use of Bannerman's Island returns to the topic of cultural landscape and Bannerman's place in the landscape of the Hudson Valley. Tourism is a large part of the industry of the Hudson Valley and Bannerman's Island does attract a number of tourists each year. Independent access to the island is not permitted. With the collapse of the tower, close viewing of the tower on the island will not be possible. Seeing the arsenal complex from three sides is possible from the river, and it is the ability to view 'the Castle' that is most important in the cultural landscape of the Mid-Hudson River Valley. As noted earlier, a cultural landscape must possess something significantly

large enough to be recognized. By focusing on the arsenal complex at this time it will allow for the potential saving of these most iconic portions of the island.

## **History**

Francis Bannerman created a magical place when he built his castle complex. He incorporated both the sensibility of the romanticism of the early 1900's with the entrepreneurial spirit at the heart of the American dream. The island was part of the history of the river before Bannerman owned the island and will continue to be so, no matter what happens to the buildings there. However, the loss of the buildings will create a void in the sense of identity for those who live in close proximity of the island. The buildings represent the sense of industry that once made the Hudson River a thriving avenue of transportation and commerce as well as a part of the country's first school of painting. Wars, along with their consequences, have been played out on its shores as well as the peaceful celebration of many who visited the Bannerman's while they lived there.

Tom Lewis sums up Bannerman's influence on the Hudson best. He stated "Bannerman planned his arsenal to stand proudly as a symbol of the strength and power that he associated with his ancestors, but in its own way, and even in its derelict state, it suggests the mystery found in the paintings of Thomas Cole, the writings of Washington Irving and the sublime character of the landscapes."<sup>135</sup>

## **Recommendations**

Through a thorough consideration of the economics, the cultural landscape features, the history, the construction, recent collapses, and treatment options the recommendations for Bannerman's Island are:

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<sup>135</sup> Lewis, *The Hudson*, 4.

1. Immediately perform a condition assessment on the remaining buildings to determine the possibility and cost of permanent stabilization as well as considering visitor safety.
2. Immediate temporary stabilization of the arsenal and tower to prevent any further structural loss, with a focus on pursuing funding to accomplish this.
3. Close the island to visitors and reinstate boat tours around the island, allowing limited access to the island on a few specific days of the year.
4. Discontinue plans to restore the residence and stabilize the residence to prevent its loss.

If we refer back to Lowenthal's list of what needs to be considered to determine the worth of Bannerman's Island: state of repair, who owns and looks after it, and what use it serves; it can be determined that there are conflicting desires for how to maintain and repair the site by New York State, as owner, and the BCT, as the organization that looks after it. However, both groups currently agree to its use as an "educational, cultural, historical and recreational facility promoting tourism" as noted in the BCT mission statement. This use is new and was not initiated by the state, although they recognize the BCT and work with them on plans for the island.

The state of repair is what needs to be determined and the recommendations are based on this primary need. Complete documentation of what fabric remains, the condition of that fabric, and what, if any, of it can be reused must occur. While a HSR is being performed, funding should continue to be sought and used to perform temporary ruins stabilization work as described in the *Ruins Stabilization in the*

*Southwestern United States* manual. If temporary stabilization does not occur in the very near future, there will be no tower to view.

Recommendation # 3 is the most controversial. New York granted “friends” status to BCT in 1995 thereby opening the door to potential tourism on Bannerman’s Island. Reverting to tours around the island would be considered by many as a step backwards; however at the present time this seems to be in the best interest of the structures that need stabilizing. By closing the island to the public, assessments and stabilization could be performed. Additionally, the economic climate may brighten in the future providing the much needed funding to not just stabilize the structures but also maintain them for future generations. Perhaps the island could be reopened in the future. As Gingsburg notes, “a stabilization technique that irreversibly prevents access is undesirable for the public interest, though it may appear in the best interest of the ruin.”<sup>136</sup>

The last recommendation to stabilize the residence rather than restore it is a logical choice if the island is closed to the public. It should be determined if the current EPF grant could be used for stabilization rather than restoration. The residence should not be lost either, and without some type of stabilization, it too will begin to collapse.

The recommendation list comprises the most practical and affordable options at the present time. This list can, and should, change dependent on the result of the assessment and economic funding. It is not unusual to have a conflict between the need to protect the site, protect the tourist and allow access to the public.

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<sup>136</sup> Gingsburg, *The Aesthetic of Ruins*, 306.

## **Conclusion**

Bannerman Island and the iconic buildings it contains are vulnerable to continued collapse. This paper has documented the role of the island and its buildings in the cultural landscape of the Hudson Valley, its historical significance during the last two hundred years, its place in the culture of commerce and transportation and its emotional value to the people of the Hudson Valley. Decisions affecting the future of the island must consider not only all of the above issues but also the current economic environment.

As part of the New York State Park System, the buildings on the island are forced to compete for funding with many other older and more nationally recognized historic structures. In order to determine what type and amount of funding is needed an inclusive condition assessment must be completed and a HSR filed with New York State. It is only through this documentation that a specific treatment plan for the buildings of Bannerman's Island can begin. It is imperative to examine all of the buildings on the island and complete a triage system for necessary temporary and permanent treatment. Consideration must be given to not just the condition of the structure but its importance in potential heritage tourism as well as the possible risk to tourists visiting the island.

Hard choices will need to be made to save these iconic structures that rise up to welcome all that travel past or live nearby. The treatment recommendations, if followed, will enable these structures to remain to be seen for many years to come.

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