

**VENTFORT HALL  
APPLICATION FOR CPA FUNDING – TOWN OF LENOX**

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# TOWN OF LENOX

## COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

### APPLICATION FOR CPA FUNDING

Date Received (office use only) \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant Name: Ventfort Hall, Mansion and Gilded Age Museum

Project Name: Restoration of Chimneys on the Mansion

Project Address: 104 Walker St., Lenox, MA 01240

Contact Person: Title: Wendy Healey, Executive Director

Phone No.: 413-637-3206 E-Mail: wendy@gildedage.org

Brief Project Description (Attach up to 1 additional page if necessary)

Ventfort Hall is requesting support from Lenox CPA funds to restore and rebuild four massive chimneys on the mansion roof that have seriously deteriorated and are in danger of collapsing. This project is critical to our mission to restore and preserve the 1893 mansion and grounds built by George and Sarah Morgan, to open it to the public as a museum dedicated to the history of the Gilded Age, and to serve as a cultural center presenting the work of regional performing and visual artists. (Continued on next page.)

Amount of CPA funding to be requested: \$156,685

The property is current with all payments to the town (taxes, water/sewer bills, etc.): Yes

Property Owner (if different from applicant)

Owner's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Owner's Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone No.: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

If the Owner is different from the applicant, you must include a letter signed by the Owner giving permission to apply for funds for the specified project on the Owner's property.

**In the following chart, mark the box(es) which best describe your project.**

Boxes indicating "NO" are not CPA eligible activities.

**Brief Project Description (cont.)**

**Restoration Master Plan**

In 2016, Ventfort Hall completed a Master Plan that provided a detailed assessment of the condition of the building and a guide for restoration of all structural components and systems. This project is the next step in a multi-phase project to complete the restoration of Ventfort Hall. Phase 1A of the plan has been completed, including extension of the fire suppression system, installation of an ADA compliant platform lift, and preparation for critical masonry repairs. The current project is part of Phase 1B, which comprises the most critical structural work to address deterioration of the exterior masonry and roof, including restoration of the historical craftsmanship that distinguishes the mansion. (Please see detailed description of Phase 1B work in the Appendix, Section A5)

**Scope of Work**

The project proposed in this application is Ventfort Hall's highest priority structural restoration: rebuilding and restoring the four chimneys on the east and west sides of the roof ridge. The massive chimneys each contain multiple flues and pilastered stacks ornamented with brick chimneypots, and their elaborate design and detailing is part of the defining character of the mansion. All four chimneys have seriously deteriorated and are in danger of collapsing, threatening the integrity of the roof and possibly causing harm to patrons on the ground. Many of the bricks have lost their mortar and have begun falling off and are currently being caught by temporary netting. Should a chimney collapse completely, moreover, we do not have adequate documentation to replicate the ornate brick details and corbeling to re-create the original chimneys.

As an historic property, Ventfort Hall adheres to rigorous construction standards for architectural restoration work. This project will entail disassembling each of the four chimneys down to sound underlying material, rebuilding the bricks to match the historic design and detailing, fabricating new custom brick as needed to replace units that are too deteriorated for re-use, and fabricating and installing new copper chimney caps. (See attached images of work areas in the Appendix, Section A2)

<b>Allowable Uses Chart</b> Check applicable category to the right.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>X</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>OPEN SPACE</b>	<b>HISTORIC RESOURCES</b>	<b>RECREATIONAL LAND</b>	<b>COMMUNITY HOUSING</b>
<b>Definitions</b> (G.L. c. 44B, §2)	Land to protect existing and future well fields, aquifers and recharge areas, watershed land, agricultural land, grasslands, fields, forest land, fresh and salt water marshes and other wetlands, ocean, river, stream, lake and pond frontage, beaches, dunes and other coastal lands, lands to protect scenic vistas, land for wildlife or nature preserve and land for recreational use	Building, structure, vessel, real property, document or artifact listed on the state register of historic places or determined by the local historic preservation commission to be significant in the history, archeology, architecture or culture of the city or town.	Land for active or passive recreational use including, but not limited, the use of land for community gardens, trails, and noncommercial youth and adult sports, and the use of land as a park, playground or athletic field.  Does <u>not</u> include horse or dog racing or the use of land for a stadium, gymnasium or similar structure.	Housing for low- and moderate-income individuals and families, including low or moderate income seniors.  Moderate income is less than 100%, and low income is less than 80% of US HUD Area Wide Median Income.
<b>ACQUISITION</b> Obtain property interest by gift, purchase, devise, grant, rental, rental purchase, lease or otherwise. Only includes eminent domain taking as provided by G.L.c. 44B.	YES	YES	YES	YES
<b>CREATION</b> To bring into being or cause to exist. <i>Sedeman v. City of Newton</i> , 452 Mass. 472 *200*)	YES	NO	YES	YES
<b>PRESERVATION</b> Protect personal or real property from injury, harm or destruction.	YES	YES	YES	YES
<b>SUPPORT</b> Provide grants, loans, rental assistance, security deposits, interest-rate write downs or other forms of assistance directly to individuals and families who are eligible for community housing or to entity that owns, operates or manages such housing, for the purpose of making housing affordable.	NO	NO	NO	YES, INCLUDES FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY'S AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST.
<b>REHABILITATION AND RESTORATION</b> Make capital improvements, or extraordinary repairs to make assets functional for intended use, including improvements to comply with federal, state or local building or access codes or federal standards for rehabilitation of historic properties.	YES, IF ACQUIRED OR CREATED WITH CP FUNDS.	YES	YES	YES, IF ACQUIRED OR CREATED WITH CP FUNDS



# TOWN OF LENOX

## COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

### APPLICATION FOR CPA FUNDING

Date Received (for office use only) \_\_\_\_\_

This application contains thirteen (13) questions which must be answered by ALL applicants. Category specific projects must also answer the specific category sections provided. If your project can be categorized into multiple CPA categories, you must provide responses to ALL pertinent category specific questions.

You may attach additional sheets as necessary to answer the numbered questions. Please clearly organize and mark your additional sheets for the Committee's review with your project name, contact information, and headings indicating which questions and category of project you are referencing in your narrative sheets. Please include page numbers.

Address: 104 Walker St., Lenox, MA 01240 \_\_\_\_\_

Map 40 Lot 36

Deed Book/Page 6416 / 234

- 1) Existing use or deed restrictions, permanent easements, historic designations, special permits, etc. if any:

Ventfort Hall is listed on the National Registry of Historic Places. There are no use or deed restrictions on the property.

- 2) Project Budget (list all sources and uses, including grants, fundraising, etc.)

**See Project Budget in Appendix.**

Project Category	Community Housing	Historic Preservation	Open Space	Recreation	
	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Source Name					
Amount					

% of Total					
Used for					
Committed?					
<b>Total Project Budget:</b>					
<b>CPC Request:</b>					

Attach additional budget sheets or project budget as necessary. Include project management, oversight, engineering, and administrative costs that may be incurred.

- 3) Timing of Funds: Describe when CPA funds and other funding sources are to be received.

The mansion chimneys are in critical condition and restoration must be completed within the next 12-18 months. Ventfort Hall currently has 65% of the funds needed for the project, either in hand or committed. Approval by the Town for our requested grant from CPA funds will enable us to complete the project before the end of 2024.

- 4) Proposed Use or Deed Restrictions after Project Completion (in accordance w/ CPA rules):

No new use or deed restrictions.

- 5) Describe the project team:

**Wendy Healey, Executive Director of Ventfort Hall**

Ms. Healey was previously a management consultant and entrepreneur with over 25 years of experience in banking, financial technology, and marketing. She has served on the WAM theater board of directors since 2018, most recently as the board President, and chairs its Governance Committee. She is a founding member of the Inclusive Economic Innovation Group, a think tank that seeks equitable solutions to systemic economic racism, and served on the board of directors of BerkShares, the local currency of the Berkshires. Wendy has been involved with local chambers of commerce her entire career, and served as the first woman president of the Avon, CT Chamber of Commerce. Wendy has an MBA and BA from the University of Connecticut.

**Rick Ryer, Chair of the Buildings and Grounds Committee of Ventfort Hall**

Mr. Ryer has chaired the Buildings and Grounds Committee since 2015 and currently serves on the Ventfort Hall Board of Directors. He was previously a Key Account Leader at Berkshire Gas and President of the American Institute of Plant Engineers. He earned a B.S. from the University of Massachusetts.

**Jamie Reinhardt, Project Architect, Hill-Architects, Engineers, Planners, Inc.**

Mr. Reinhardt is experienced in restoration of historic properties, following requirements of the MA Historical Commission, and has worked with Ventfort Hall on a number of projects. He is a registered architect in Massachusetts and New York, and holds a B. Arch. from the New York Institute of Technology.

**Paul Marshall, Manager of Architectural Services, Hill-Architects, Engineers, Planners, Inc.**

Mr. Marshall has nearly three decades of experience as an architect including major historical restoration projects including the Mahaiwe Theater in Great Barrington and the restoration and re-purposing of the 19th-century fire station in Pittsfield which won an award from the MA Historical Commission. He holds a B.S. in Architecture from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

**CENAXO, Construction Contractor**

Cenaxo, based in Willington, Connecticut, has a team of expert qualified personnel well trained in the art and craft of architectural restoration and has worked on a number of projects for Ventfort Hall.

- 6) Additional Information: Attach, as necessary, additional material including photographs, maps, letters of support, feasibility studies, ownership letters or site control verification, engineer or architect drawings. For Historic Preservation projects, if the project is not state register listed, the applicant must provide a letter from the Historical Commission which details the significance of the project to Lenox's history, culture, architecture or archeology.

Additional materials included in Appendix:

- Project budget
- Photographs of facility
- Architectural drawings and elevations
- Contractor estimate
- Summary of Master Plan Phases
- Ventfort Hall Master Plan (2016): Executive Summary
- Letter from Lenox Historical Commission
- Letters of Support

## Funding Considerations

(All applicants must fill out this section)

- 7) In what way is CPA funding a catalyst for leveraging other funding sources?

A grant from Lenox CPA funds would demonstrate to other potential funders that the Town considers Ventfort Hall to be an historical and cultural asset that contributes to the local economy. Support from the Town will enable us to meet our goal for this phase of restoration. CPA funding will also motivate prospective individual and foundation donors to contribute to subsequent phases of the project. State and national funders also often require evidence of local support in determining their grant awards.

- 8) What is the breadth of impact on the lives of the citizens of the Town?

Ventfort Hall is a historical, cultural, and economic asset for the Town of Lenox. The property is on the National Register of Historic Places and one of only four extant Berkshire Gilded Age estates now open to the public.

### **A Major Historical and Cultural Site**

Ventfort Hall is a Jacobean Revival mansion built in 1893 for George and Sarah Morgan (sister of J. Pierpont Morgan) as a summer home in the Berkshires. It was saved from destruction by a determined group of Lenox residents and is one of the most significant historical structures in Lenox. It opened to the public in 2001 as a museum dedicated to the history of the Gilded Age, the period between the Civil War and World War I that was a time of transformational change in American social and economic life. Located in downtown Lenox, the site also serves as a cultural center presenting the work of regional performing and visual artists.

### **Programming for Residents and Visitors of All Ages**

We present a robust schedule of annual programming that serves regional residents as well as tourists to Lenox, including tours, exhibits, programs, theater, music, and special events. Notable programs for all ages include a lecture series that presents historians, scholars, journalists, and other experts on the Gilded Age period; cabaret and jazz concerts that use the Morgans' original Steinway piano; outdoor theater and dance; a marionette show by local puppeteer, Carl Sprague; an annual performance of *A Christmas Carol* by the great-great-grandson of Charles Dickens; and exhibits of historic photography and period costumes.

### **Bringing New Audiences to Lenox**

We regularly host or collaborate with local organizations for exhibits and events which bring people to downtown Lenox. Recent examples include an exhibit of period costumes from the collection of the Berkshire County Historical Society, a sold-out concert by Berkshires Jazz, and wine tastings by Nejaime's Wine Cellars. We were the host venue for the inaugural Holiday Artist's Market, in

partnership with Gordon Fine Arts and the Lenox Chamber of Commerce, and have hosted events for the Berkshire International Club, the Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires, and the Massachusetts Nonprofit Network.

### **Accessible and Inclusive**

We strive to be accessible to all members of the community and offer free admission to local residents using EBT or ConnectorCare cards and during free family hours, and free or discounted admission through the library pass program.

## 9) What is the economic benefit to the Town?

### **Cultural Destination**

Ventfort Hall hosted nearly 11,000 visitors in 2022 and is expected to exceed that in 2023, potentially reaching 15,000. Ventfort Hall is located in the downtown Lenox Cultural District close to local inns, restaurants, stores, Shakespeare & Co. theater, and the Tanglewood Music Center. We are one of few Berkshire historic sites open year-round, closing only three days each year, and therefore available to fall and winter holiday and ski season tourists. Ventfort Hall also serves as a cultural center presenting the work of regional performing and visual artists and authors.

### **Prime Facility for Weddings and Event Rentals**

The property, with elegant indoor spaces, grand piano, and extensive tree-lined grounds, is also a desirable rental site for events, concerts, meetings, and weddings. We hosted 12 events during 2022, three of which were destination weddings that bring first time visitors to the Berkshires and generate spending in the local economy on lodging, restaurants, retail, and other cultural organizations.

### **Publicity**

Ventfort Hall is featured in national and regional publications that attract visitors and event planners to the Berkshires. In 2022, *House Beautiful* named Ventfort Hall one of the top 10 Gilded Age houses in the United States, along with the Biltmore in Asheville, NC and the Breakers in Newport, RI. Ventfort Hall is also regularly covered by regional publications including *Berkshire Magazine*, *Berkshire Landscapes* magazine, the *Only in Massachusetts* e-newsletter, the *Berkshire Eagle*, the *Berkshire Edge*, and the *Veil & Vow* wedding guide.

### **Film Production**

The site has also hosted major film shoots. The most well-known was “Cider House Rules,” the 1999 Academy Award-winning movie based on the novel by John Irving, that brought world-wide attention to the property and to Lenox. Others were “The Man Who Killed Hitler and Then Big Foot” (2018), and the indie film “Onyx the Fortuitous and the Talisman of Souls” that was filmed at Ventfort Hall in March and April 2022. It premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in January 2023 and was shown as part of the Berkshire International Film Festival in June 2023. Movie productions bring publicity to Ventfort

Hall and Lenox, and generate revenue in the community during filming for lodging, catering, and local employment.

10) What is the long-term benefit to the Town?

Visitation to Ventfort Hall has been steadily growing and we are on track to increase visitation 30% this year compared to 2022. The project that is the subject of this application, the restoration of the chimneys, is part of a multi-phase plan to restore the property. As we continue to restore the mansion and grounds, we are able to offer more programming and experiences for visitors, and therefore provide more benefits to Lenox residents and attractions for tourists.

Restoring the chimneys will improve the structural integrity of the mansion and help ensure the safety of visitors and neighbors of Ventfort Hall. As a major destination within the downtown Lenox Cultural District, Ventfort Hall attracts visitors who patronize lodging, restaurant, and retail businesses as well as other cultural organizations.

11) What is the long-term cost to the town if action is not taken?

Ventfort Hall is an irreplaceable estate that embodies the peak of Gilded Age style, construction, and craftsmanship. Moreover, it is one of only four of the extant Berkshire Gilded Age estates now open to the public. If not restored and maintained, Lenox would lose one of its architectural masterpieces and a significant downtown attraction and economic asset.

12) What is the urgency of the project?

The chimneys on the mansion roof have severely deteriorated and now pose a danger to the mansion itself as well as to staff and visitors. Many of the bricks on the chimneys have lost their mortar and have begun falling off, currently being caught by temporary netting. Falling bricks can cause severe harm to the roof or to patrons on the ground. Moreover, should a chimney collapse completely, we do not have adequate documentation to replicate the ornate brick details and corbeling to re-create the ornately constructed chimneys.

13) Explain any other factors which may be relevant to your specific project.

## Community Housing Projects

**(Only Community Housing projects must fill out this section)**

14) Please explain how this community housing project meets CPC goals, and goals expressed in other community planning documents:

N/A

15) Please Identify Affordability Level(s):

_____ % of area median income	no. of units _____
_____ % of area median income	no. of units _____
_____ % of area median income	no. of units _____

16) Please describe any additional aspects to the project, including existing site conditions, remediation, permitting, zoning regulations, whether it is the adaptive reuse of an existing building or site, whether the site is close to community services (such as schools or transportation) etc. and how your project will address these:

17) Community housing projects should provide a letter of support from the Lenox Housing Trust and Committee indicating support of the project.

## **Historic Preservation Projects**

**(Only Historic Preservation projects must fill out this section)**

Applicants should note: All CPA-funded historic preservation projects must comply with the US Secretary of the Interior's standards for the treatment of historic properties.

**18)** Clearly describe how the project meets Historic Preservation goals of the Community Preservation Plan and the 2021 Master Plan:

The Community Preservation Plan states that one of the major goals of the CPC is "to protect and preserve the historic resources of the community by acquiring, preserving, and restoring buildings, structures, property, and artifacts that are a significant part of the history of Lenox." Ventfort Hall was created during the Gilded Age, an influential period in the history of Lenox, and its distinctive architecture represents a highpoint of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century culture, taste, and workmanship.

Ventfort Hall helps fulfill the Town of Lenox goals for economic growth. The town's 2021 Master Plan cites tourism as its number one economic development engine and historic preservation as integral to that strategy, stating "heritage tourism has helped distinguish Lenox as a destination and, in turn, serves to buoy the Town's economy," and names Ventfort Hall as one of its "world class cultural offerings."

The Master Plan cites among the priority goals for historic preservation to "make historic preservation and community character central to Lenox's quality of life," and "heighten public appreciation of Lenox's history and historic resources through storytelling and other means." Ventfort Hall is dedicated to presenting the history of the Gilded Age through tours, lectures, exhibits, and theater. We also plan to portray the Festival House era, when the property was a site that offered hospitality to all, including minority groups who could not stay elsewhere, and offered a broad range of arts programs.

**19)** Describe any other relevant information about the project and the site.

Ventfort Hall is a museum dedicated to the history of the Gilded Age, the period between the Civil War and World War I that was a time of transformational change in American social and economic life driven by industrialization, technological innovation, urbanization, the women's and labor movements, and immigration.

Ventfort Hall also illuminates other key periods of Berkshire history not presented by other local organizations. In 1950, Ventfort Hall became Festival House, an arts-oriented hotel and one of the first in the Berkshires to welcome visitors of all races and religions. The hotel brought in art classes and exhibitions, a resident theater company, and hosted performances by Boston Symphony Orchestra

musicians, and folk and jazz artists including Pete Seeger, Odetta, and Dizzy Gillespie. After Festival House closed, Ventfort Hall was used as a summer ballet camp by the Fokine Ballet until 1976.

Future plans include restoring the gardens, continuing to restore more of the upper floor rooms in the mansion, and offering programming that represents the Festival House era.

**20)** Historic preservation projects should provide information describing the historic, cultural, architectural and archeological significance of their site and a letter of support from the Historical Commission.

Ventfort Hall is a Jacobean Revival mansion built in 1893 for George and Sarah Morgan (sister of J. Pierpont Morgan) as a summer home in the Berkshires. Designed by the prominent Boston firm of Rotch & Tilden, the original 26-acre estate included landscaped gardens, arboretum, two gatehouses, a carriage house and stable. It boasted the most modern amenities of its time including central heating, plumbing, electric and gas lighting, an elevator, and a burglar alarm.

The property represents the peak of Gilded Age style and construction, incorporating innovative building technology and inspired by European art and craftsmanship. The Jacobean Revival style drew inspiration from the period of the English Renaissance, with a red brick and brownstone exterior, *porte cochere* entrance, and rear wooden veranda, and elaborate detailing characterized by Tudor arches, gables and parapets, stone trim around windows and doors, crenellations, leaded windows, tall chimneys, and tower. The interior has 28 rooms, a 3-story great hall, and intricately carved woodwork throughout. Virtually all of the stylistic elements at Ventfort Hall are original and character defining.

After 1911, following the deaths of the Morgans, Ventfort Hall changed hands numerous times and by 1991 had fallen into serious disrepair and was slated for demolition. Community members formed the nonprofit Ventfort Hall Association in 1997, raised funds to purchase and restore the property, and opened it to the public in 2001. It is now on the National Register of Historic Places.

A letter of support from the Lenox Historical Commission is included in the Appendix.

## **Open Space and Recreation Projects**

**(Only Open Space and Recreation projects must fill out this section)**

**21)** Clearly describe how the project meets the Open Space and Recreation goals of the Community Preservation Plan and the 2015 Open Space and Recreation Plan.

N/A

**22)** Explain the long-term maintenance and operating plan for the project upon completion.

**23)** Explain how the site will be marked or signed to indicate it is a public resource.

## Certification

**24)** This application was prepared, reviewed, submitted by:

Name: Wendy Healey

Phone No.: 413-637-3206

E-Mail: wendy@gildedage.org

*I hereby certify that all of the above and included information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. [for non-municipal applicants only: I further declare my willingness to enter into a Contract with the Town of Lenox, including liens, deed restrictions and other means of security to govern the use and expenditure of CPA funds.]*

Signature: Wendy Healey

Date: 10/20/2023

<b>VENTFORT HALL: Restoration of Chimneys on the Mansion</b>				
<b>Lenox CPA Funding Application</b>				
<b>PROJECT BUDGET</b>				
<b>SOURCES OF FUNDS</b>			<b>NOTES</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
	Ventfort Hall restoration funds	\$ 43,100	Committed - in hand	10%
	Private foundations (2)	\$ 100,000	Committed	22%
	MCC Cultural Facilities Fund	\$ 149,000	Committed	33%
	Town of Lenox CPA funding	\$ 156,685	Requested	35%
	<b>TOTAL SOURCES OF FUNDS</b>	<b>\$ 448,785</b>		<b>100%</b>
<b>USES OF FUNDS</b>				
	<b>Chimney Rebuild &amp; Restoration*</b>			
	Disassemble chimney, rebuild brick to match original design, provide new brick as needed as replacements, fabricate and install copper chimney caps			
	<b>TOTAL USES OF FUNDS</b>	<b>\$ 448,785</b>		
	<i>*Contractor bid from CENAXO included with application</i>			



Aerial view of the roof of Ventfort Hall, all four chimneys visible



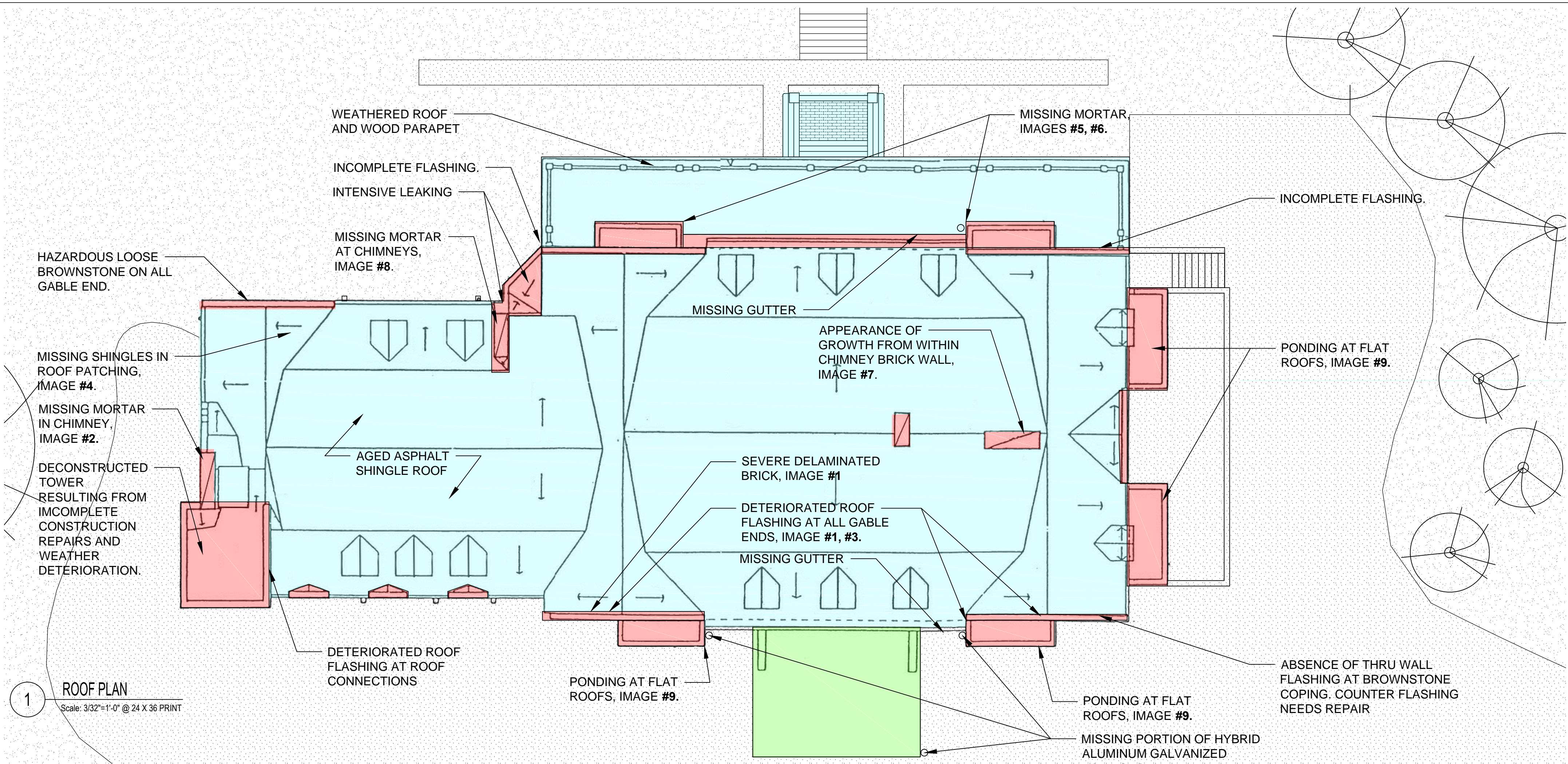
Chimneys on the West side of the roof. Chimneys currently netted for temporary safety.



View of Ventfort Hall roof, all four (netted) chimneys visible. (Note that the tower on the left has been worked on since this photo was taken.)



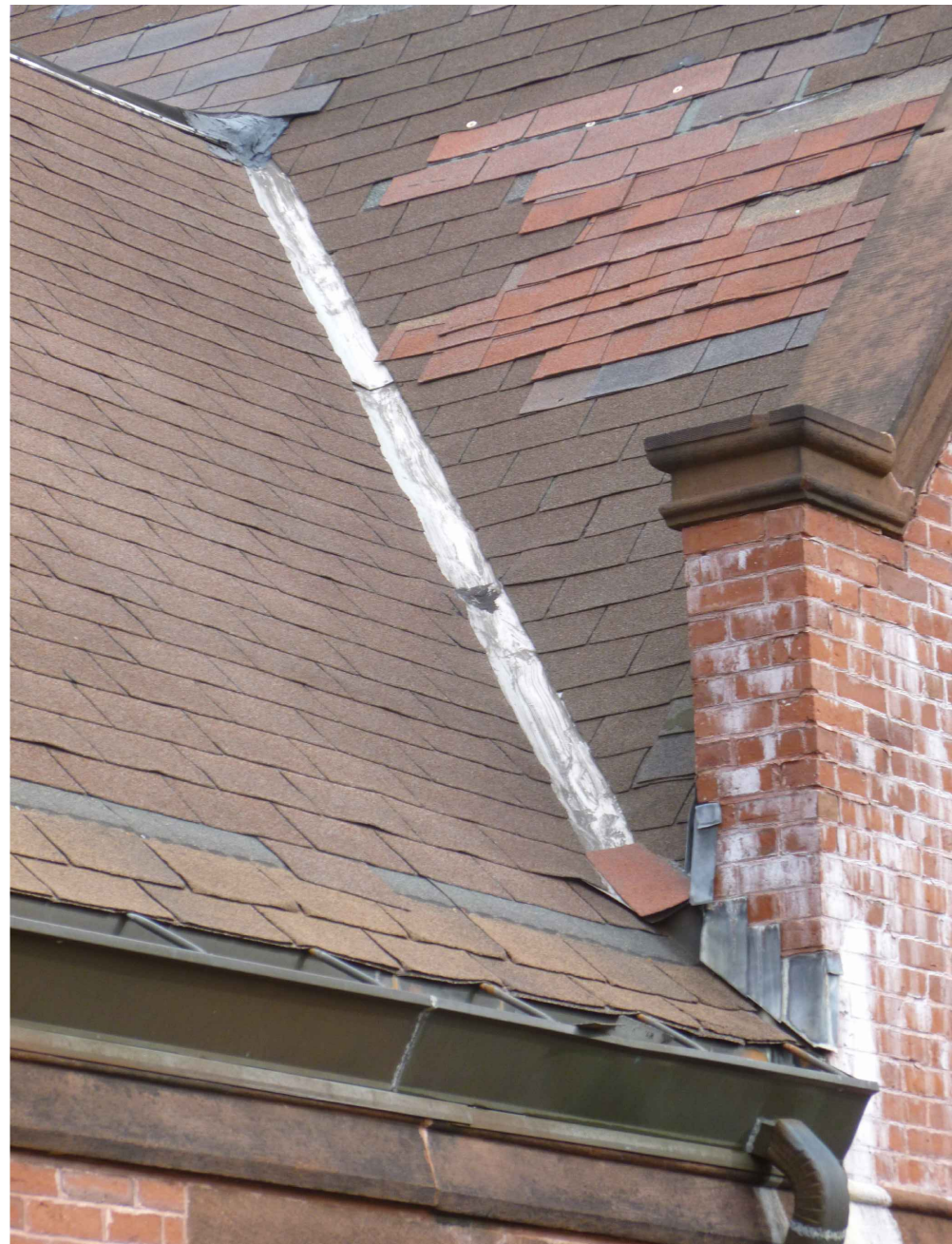
Chimneys on the East side of the house



**LEGEND**

- PHASE 1: EXTREMELY URGENT  
- WORKS TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN 1 YEAR
- PHASE 2: URGENT  
- WORKS TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN 2-3 YEARS
- PHASE 3  
- WORKS TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN 3-4 YEAR
- PHASE 4  
- WORKS TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN 5-6 YEARS
- NOT SHADED  
- GOOD FOR 20+ YEARS

**1 ROOF PLAN**  
Scale: 3/32"=1'-0" @ 24 X 36 PRINT



Architect:  
**SPENCER & VOGT GROUP**  
*architecture preservation*

1 Thompson Square, Suite 504  
Charlestown, MA 02129  
617.227.2675  
www.spencervogt.com

Seal:

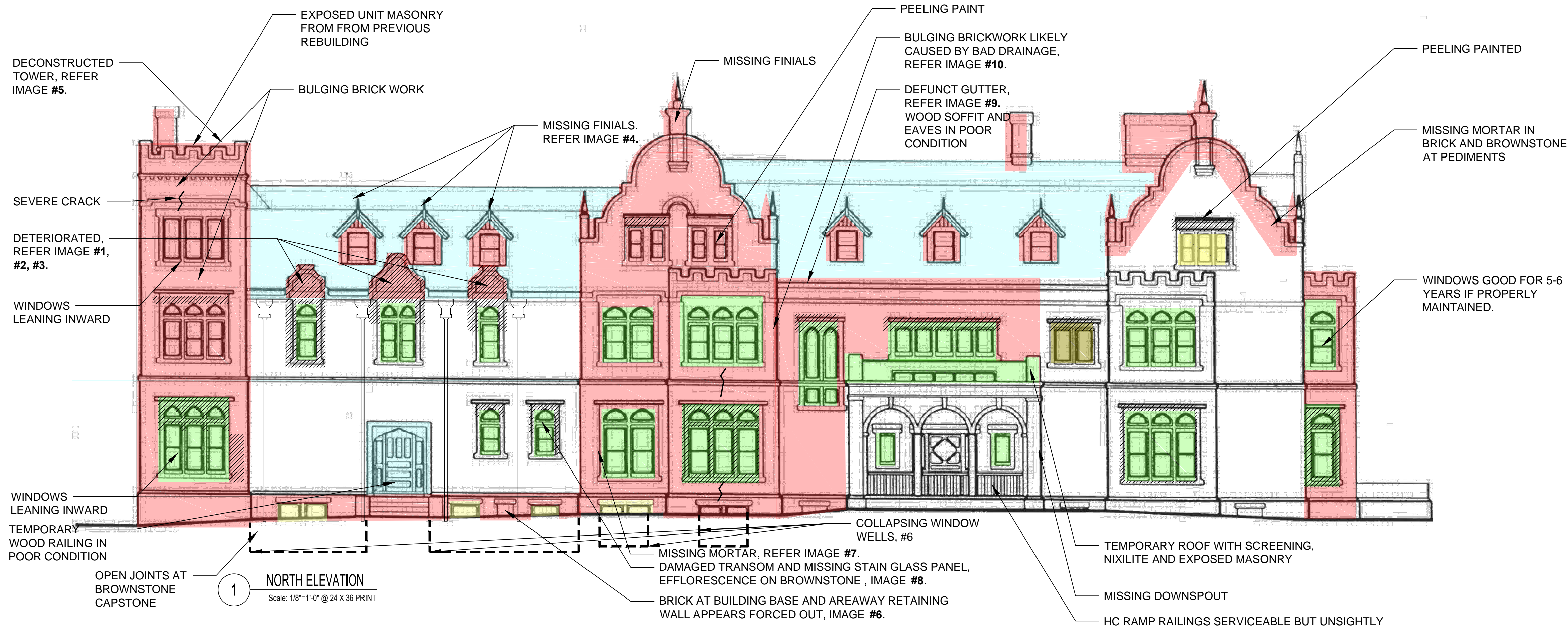
Consultant:

ISSUE / REVISIONS:	DATE	DRAWN BY	CHECKED BY	PROJECT NUMBER
ADDENDUM #1 2.28.2016	2016.05.26	XX	XX	XXXX.XX

**VENTFORT HALL**  
104 WALKER STREET, LENOX, MA

CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS

EX-104



LEGEND

- PHASE 1: EXTREMELY URGENT  
- WORKS TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN 1 YEAR
- PHASE 2: URGENT  
- WORKS TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN 2-3 YEARS
- PHASE 3  
- WORKS TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN 3-4 YEAR
- PHASE 4  
- WORKS TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN 5-6 YEARS
- NOT SHADED  
- GOOD FOR 20+ YEARS

1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10



Seal:

Consultant:

ISSUE / REVISIONS:  
ADDENDUM #1 3.25.2016

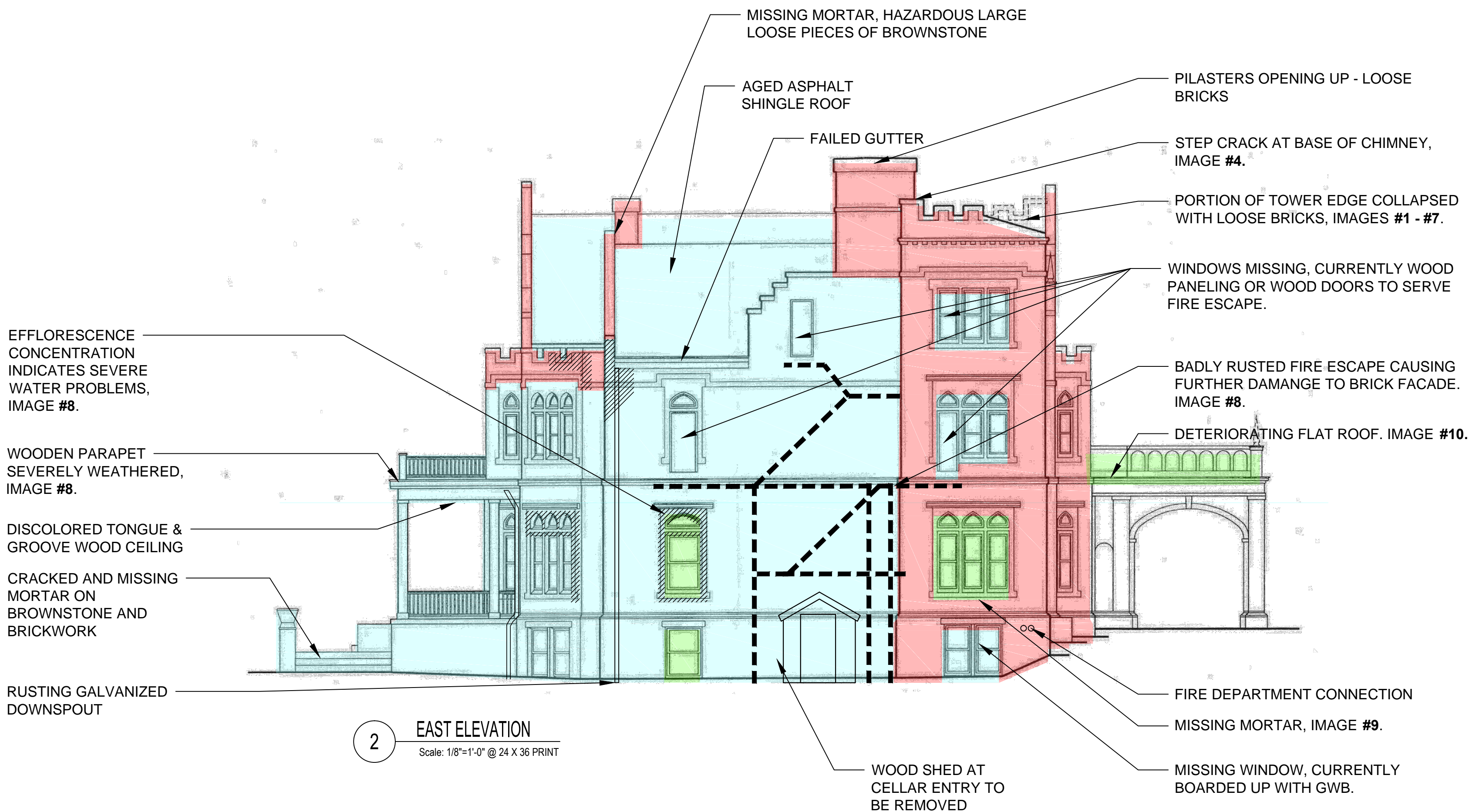
2016.05.26

Date:  
Drawn by:  
Checked by:  
Project Number:

VENTFORT HALL  
104 WALKER STREET, LENOX, MA

CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS

EX-200



**LEGEND**

PHASE 1: EXTREMELY URGENT  
- WORKS TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN 1 YEAR

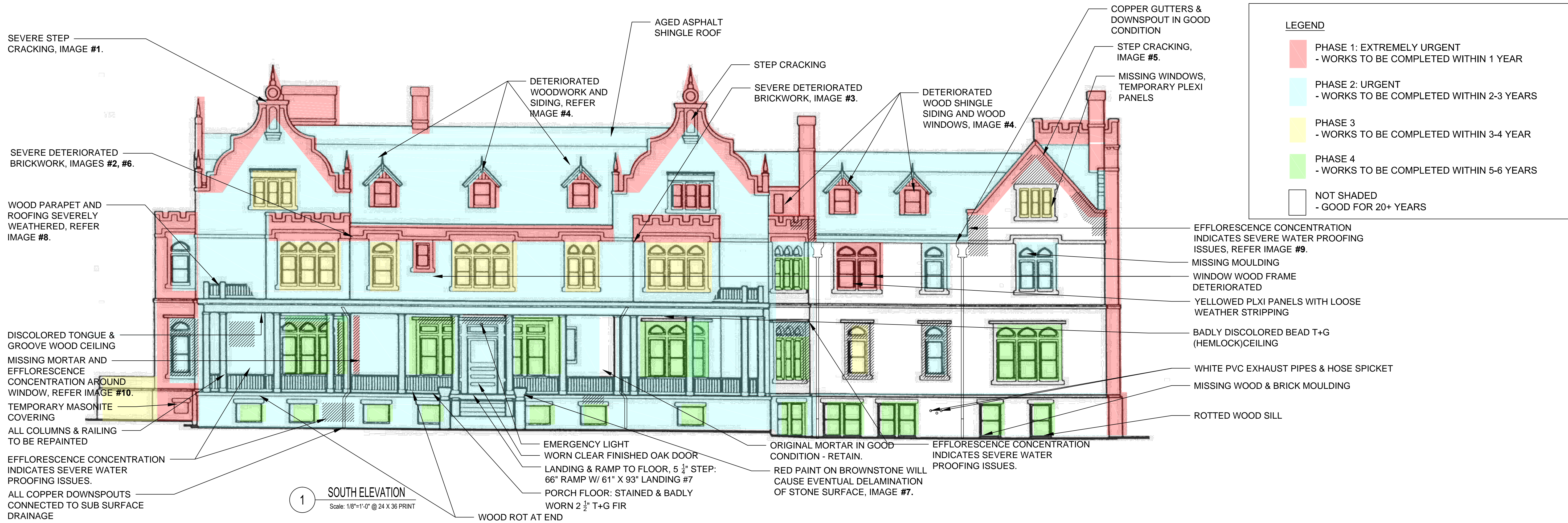
PHASE 2: URGENT  
- WORKS TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN 2-3 YEARS

PHASE 3  
- WORKS TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN 3-4 YEAR

PHASE 4  
- WORKS TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN 5-6 YEARS

NOT SHADED  
- GOOD FOR 20+ YEARS

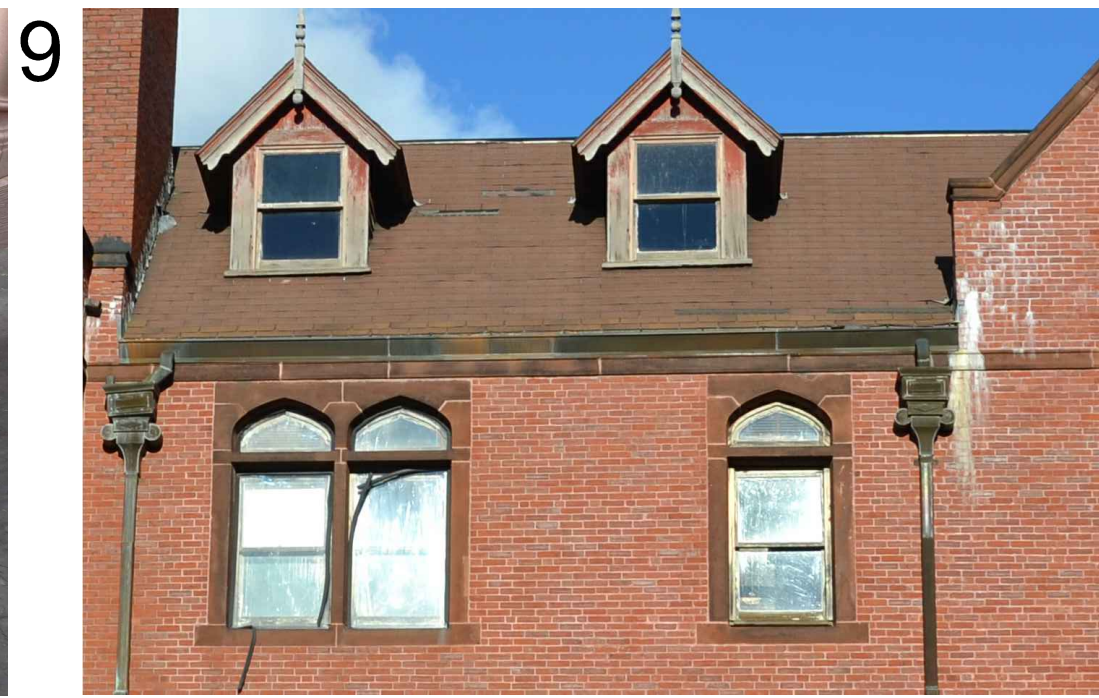
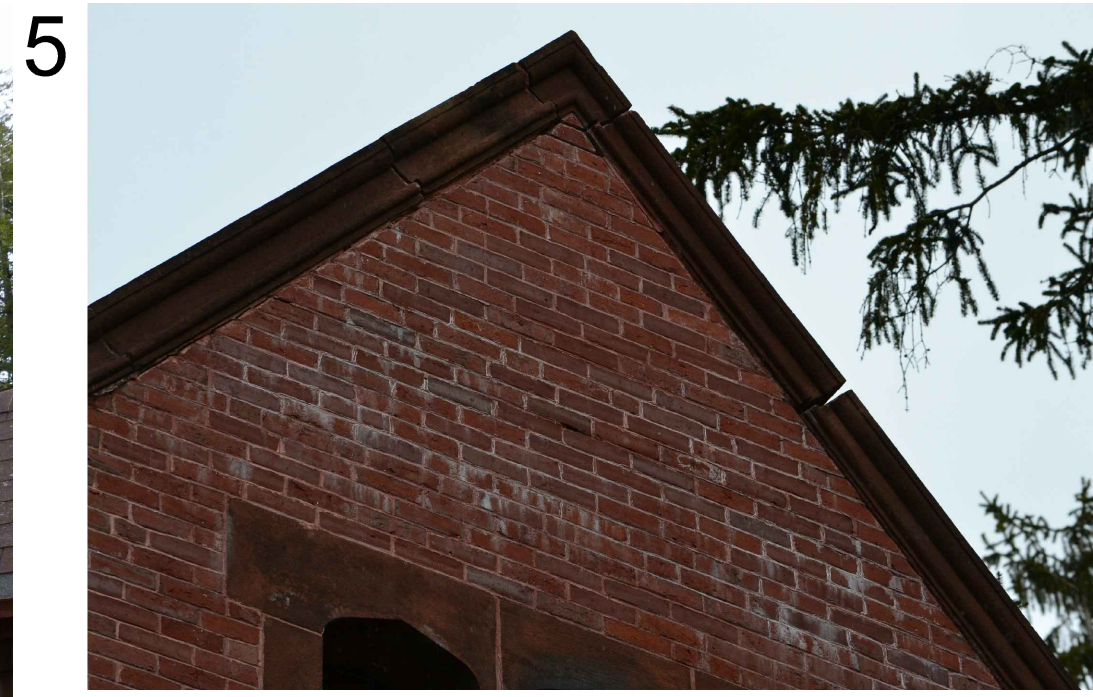


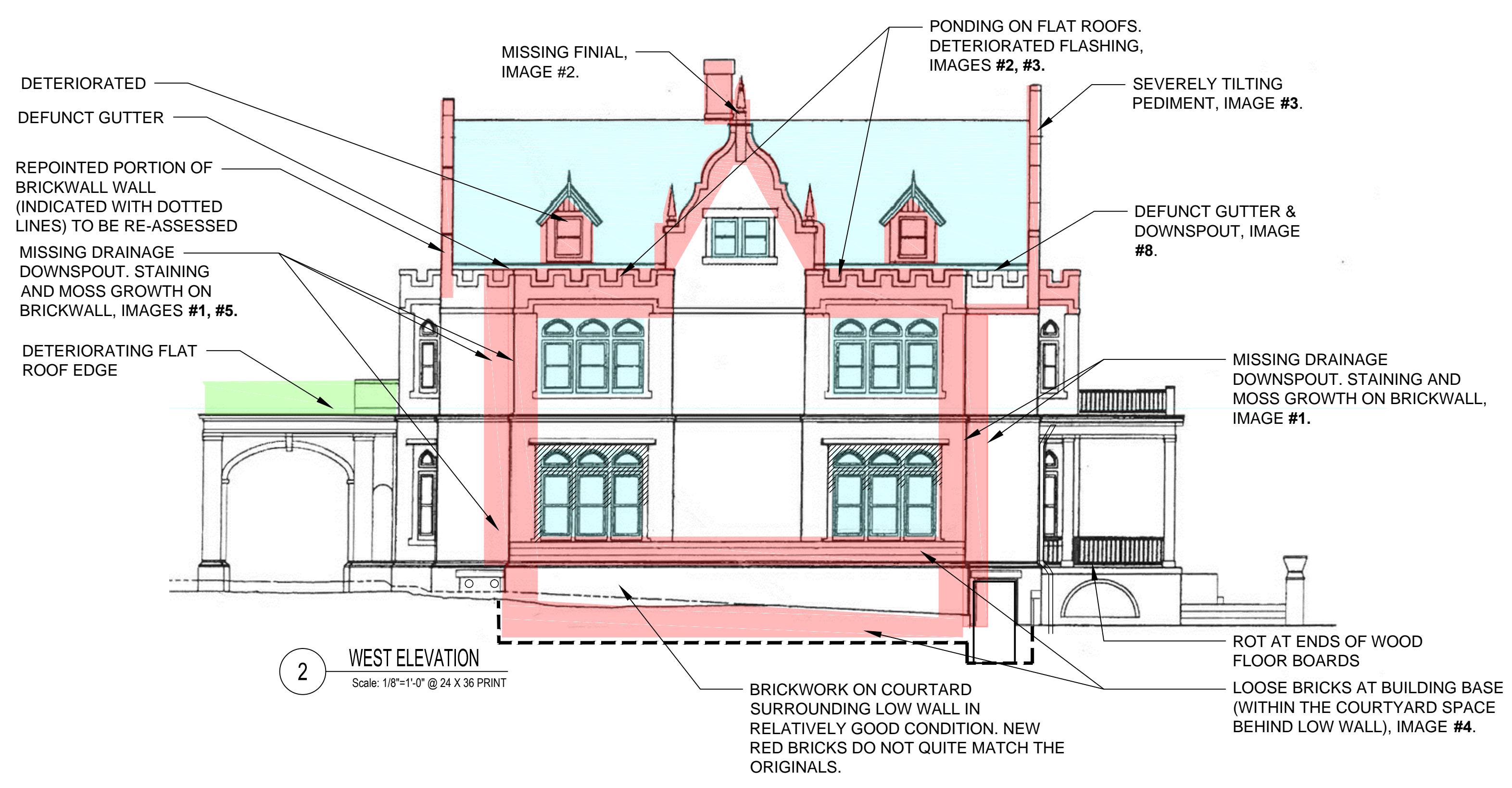


**LEGEND**

- PHASE 1: EXTREMELY URGENT  
- WORKS TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN 1 YEAR
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- WORKS TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN 2-3 YEARS
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- WORKS TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN 3-4 YEAR
- PHASE 4  
- WORKS TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN 5-6 YEARS
- NOT SHADED  
- GOOD FOR 20+ YEARS

1 SOUTH ELEVATION  
Scale: 1/8"=1'-0" @ 24 X 36 PRINT





**LEGEND**

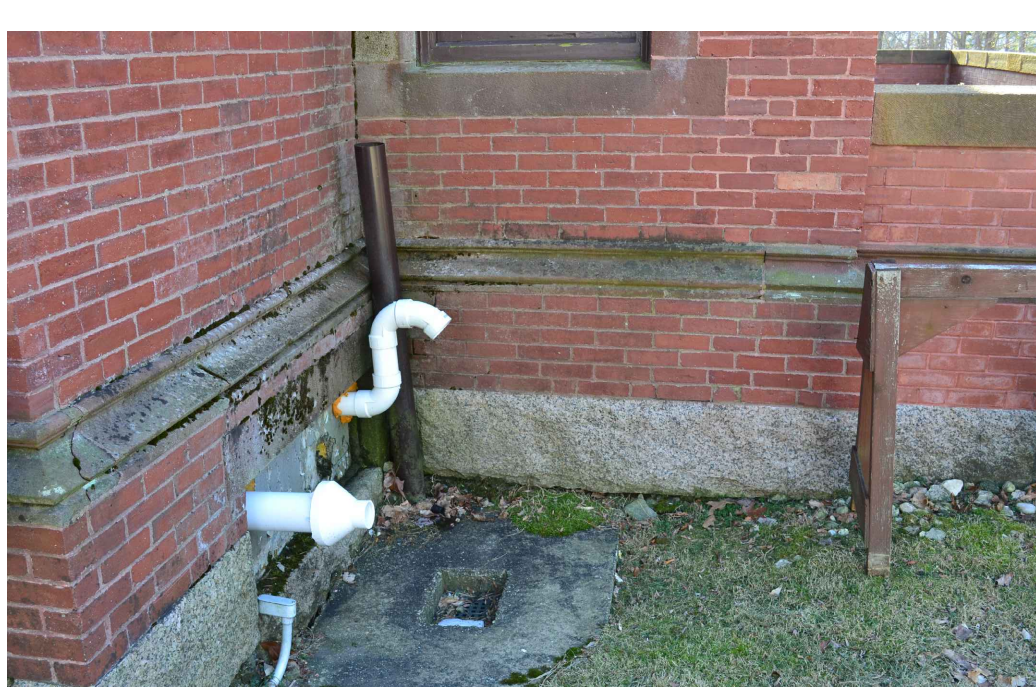
PHASE 1: EXTREMELY URGENT  
- WORKS TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN 1 YEAR

PHASE 2: URGENT  
- WORKS TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN 2-3 YEARS

PHASE 3  
- WORKS TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN 3-4 YEAR

PHASE 4  
- WORKS TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN 5-6 YEARS

NOT SHADED  
- GOOD FOR 20+ YEARS



Architect:  
**SPENCER & VOGT GROUP**  
architecture preservation

1 Thompson Square, Suite 504  
Charlestown, MA 02129  
617.227.2675  
www.spencervogt.com

Seal:

Consultant:

ISSUE / REVISIONS:  
ADDENDUM #1 3.25.2016

Date: 2016.05.26

Drawn by: XX

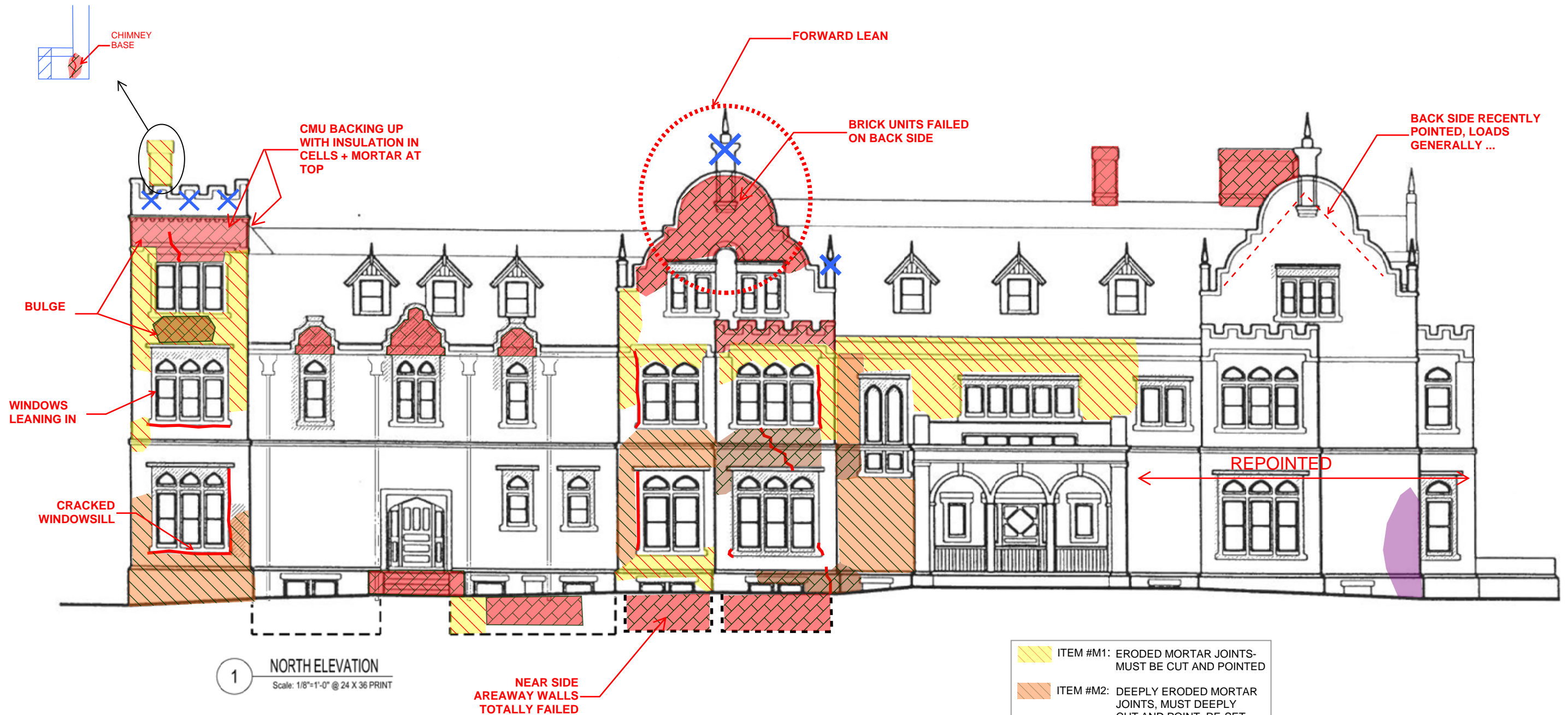
Checked by: XX

Project Number: 1519.00

VENTFORT HALL  
104 WALKER STREET, LENOX, MA

CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS

EX-203



# **VENTFORT HALL** **EXTERIOR MASONRY** **CONDITIONS**

Structures North Consulting Engineers, Inc.  
60 Washington St., Salem, MA 01970

9-16-2016

JMW

**EM-1**



1

## EAST ELEVATION

Scale: 1/8"=1'-0" @ 24 X 36 PRINT

- ITEM #M1: ERODED MORTAR JOINTS- MUST BE CUT AND POINTED
- ITEM #M2: DEEPLY ERODED MORTAR JOINTS, MUST DEEPLY CUT AND POINT, RE-SET STONES THAT LOOSEN DURING CUTTING
- ITEM #M3: TIGHT BUT UNBONDED COLLAR JOINTS AS VIBRATED WHEN TAPPED
- ITEM #M4: DEBONDED WEATHERED MASONRY
- ITEM #M5: BULGED OR SHIFTED FLAT MASONRY, MUST BE STRIPPED AND RE-SET
- ITEM #M6: BULGED OR SHIFTED PROJECTING OR STRUCTURALLY DISTINCT MASONRY, MUST BE REMOVED AND RE-SET
- ITEM #M7: EFFLORESCENT DEPOSITS, SIGN OF DAMNNESS OR LEAKAGE
- ITEM #M8: CRACK THROUGH MORTAR JOINTS, EXCAVATE, POINT AND GROUT, RE-SET STONES ALONG CRACK THAT HAVE LOOSENED

# VENTFORT HALL

## EXTERIOR MASONRY CONDITIONS

Structures North Consulting Engineers, Inc.  
60 Washington St., Salem, MA 01970

9-16-2016

JMW

EM-2



- ITEM #M1: ERODED MORTAR JOINTS- MUST BE CUT AND POINTED
- ITEM #M2: DEEPLY ERODED MORTAR JOINTS, MUST DEEPLY CUT AND POINT, RE-SET STONES THAT LOOSEN DURING CUTTING
- ITEM #M3: TIGHT BUT UNBONDED COLLAR JOINTS AS VIBRATED WHEN TAPPED
- ITEM #M4: DEBONDED WEATHERED MASONRY
- ITEM #M5: BULDGED OR SHIFTED FLAT MASONRY, MUST BE STRIPPED AND RE-SET
- ITEM #M6: BULDGED OR SHIFTED PROJECTING OR STRUCTURALLY DISTINCT MASONRY, MUST BE REMOVED AND RE-SET
- ITEM #M7: EFFLORESCENT DEPOSITS, SIGN OF DAMNESS OR LEAKAGE
- ITEM #M8: CRACK THROUGH MORTAR JOINTS, EXCAVATE, POINT AND GROUT, RE-SET STONES ALONG CRACK THAT HAVE LOOSENED

## VENTFORT HALL

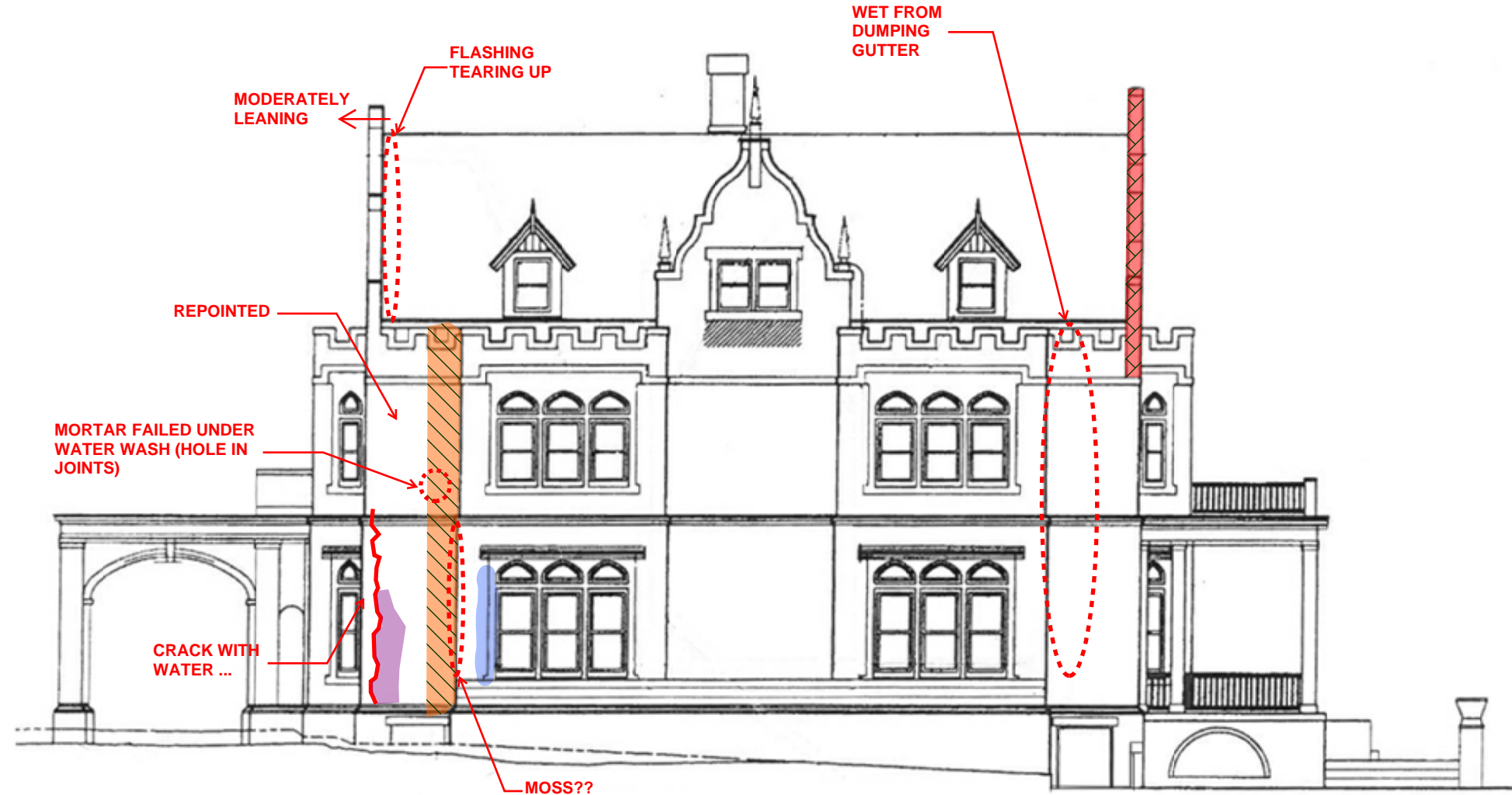
### EXTERIOR MASONRY CONDITIONS

Structures North Consulting Engineers, Inc.  
60 Washington St., Salem, MA 01970

9-16-2016

JMW

# EM-3



- ITEM #M1: ERODED MORTAR JOINTS- MUST BE CUT AND POINTED
- ITEM #M2: DEEPLY ERODED MORTAR JOINTS, MUST DEEPLY CUT AND POINT, RE-SET STONES THAT LOOSEN DURING CUTTING
- ITEM #M3: TIGHT BUT UNBONDED COLLAR JOINTS AS VIBRATED WHEN TAPPED
- ITEM #M4: DEBONDED WEATHERED MASONRY
- ITEM #M5: BULGED OR SHIFTED FLAT MASONRY, MUST BE STRIPPED AND RE-SET
- ITEM #M6: BULGED OR SHIFTED PROJECTING OR STRUCTURALLY DISTINCT MASONRY, MUST BE REMOVED AND RE-SET
- ITEM #M7: EFFLORESCENT DEPOSITS, SIGN OF DAMNESS OR LEAKAGE
- ITEM #M8: CRACK THROUGH MORTAR JOINTS, EXCAVATE, POINT AND GROUT, RE-SET STONES ALONG CRACK THAT HAVE LOOSENED

1 WEST ELEVATION  
Scale: 1/8"=1'-0" @ 24 X 36 PRINT

## VENTFORT HALL EXTERIOR MASONRY CONDITIONS

Structures North Consulting Engineers, Inc.  
60 Washington St., Salem, MA 01970

9-16-2016

JMW

EM-4



PLAN • PROTECT • PRESERVE

Tuesday, January 31, 2023

Wendy Healey  
Ventfort Hall  
105 Walker Street  
Lenox, MA

Re: Ventfort Hall Next Phase Budget Estimates

The following is our budget proposal to you for the next phase of work at Ventfort Hall, located in Lenox, MA.

**Urgent Masonry Restoration:**

**Tower Rebuild & Reinforcement**

Scaffold four sides of tower for access to top masonry crenellation work  
Remove face brick and brownstone down to top of band course above windows  
Rebuild brick with structural enhancements  
Reinstall brownstone band  
Does not include reinstalling brownstone top caps  
Top of brick capped with aluminum flashing  
Install New fully adhered EPDM Roof System

*Labor, Access and Materials BUDGET*     \$398,706

**Chimney Rebuild & Restoration - 4 Locations**

Scaffold each Chimney to access all four sides  
Disassemble Chimney to sound material  
Rebuild brick to match historic design intent & Detailing  
Provide new Custom Brick as needed to replace deteriorated units  
Fabricate & Install new 20oz Copper Chimney Caps

*Labor, Access and Materials BUDGET*     \$448,785

**Urgent Roofing Replacement:**

**Low Slope Roofing Replacement & Flashings - EPDM**

Partially Scaffold N & S Elevation to access the roof  
Remove Existing Membrane & Install New .060 EPDM Membrane  
Fabricate & Install new Flashing details at chimneys, eaves, hips & terminations  
Provide 20year manufacturer Warrantee  
Replacement flashings to be made out of 20oz CRC Copper

*Labor, Access and Materials BUDGET*     \$338,770

**Total Proposed Projects Above BUDGET     \$1,186,261**

Thank you for the opportunity to propose solutions for this project. Please let us know if we can improve the work items presented above.

  
Sean Delaney

Project Manager, Cenaxo, LLC

Ventfort Hall Association  
104 Walker St., PO Box 2424  
Lenox, MA 01240  
(413) 637-3206 [www.GildedAge.org](http://www.GildedAge.org)

### **Summary of Spencer & Vogt Master Plan Phases:**

The Ventfort Hall Master Plan by Spencer & Vogt restoration architects was completed in 2016. Subsequently, work on phase 1A was completed. We are currently raising funds to complete projects in phase 1B, which is the bulk of the urgently needed work. Work is listed in the priority order in which it needs to be completed, based on the recommendations of our consultants and project architect.

### **Phase IA: Critical Emergency Envelope and Life Safety, Elevator - COMPLETED**

The initial phase comprised preparation for emergency masonry repairs, extension of the fire suppression system, and installation of a platform lift.

### **Phase IB: Urgent Envelope and Life Safety**

Major tasks in this phase include extensive masonry restoration, repair of the porch balustrade, and restoration of 13 windows at the dormers and tower. This is the phase we are currently working on, and it includes the bulk of the critical structural repairs and restoration. Projects will be completed in the following order, based on urgency:

- Masonry Restoration:
  - Urgent stabilization of 4 brick chimneys (chimneys currently netted to catch falling bricks; if chimneys collapse completely, no documentation exists to replicate the original construction)
  - Urgent stabilization of north tower and wall faces (tower currently scaffolded and held with tension wire to prevent collapse)
  - Restore, replace downspouts and gutters
  - Stabilization of all pediments
- Restore, replace roof
- Dormer repair, window restoration
- Porch balustrade

### **Phase II: Continuing Envelope and First Floor Interior**

This phase includes deep repointing of the south elevation, window restoration at the north and east elevations, and restoration of wood floors and plaster walls and ceilings at the interior.

### **Phase III: Continuing Envelope and Second Floor Interior**

Major tasks in the third phase include exterior painting, restoration of Caroline's suite on the second floor, and masonry repairs.

### **Phase IV: Continued Envelope Restoration**

### **Phase V: Site Improvements**

Site improvements include expanded parking, site lighting, and landscaping



## MASTER PLAN: VOLUME I

# VENTFORT HALL

LENOX, MASSACHUSETTS

March 2017

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & METHODOLOGY

### Overview

It has been a privilege to prepare a Master Plan for the historic Ventfort Hall in Lenox, a vibrant community resource and a national treasure. Faced with the challenge of maintaining this 123-year old structure and ensuring its integrity and utility, the Ventfort Hall Association commissioned this report as both roadmap and guidebook for preservation of the building and its immediate grounds. The study assessed every aspect of the mansion and its site, from the state of the masonry to the condition of the heating systems. Essentially we find that this distinguished symbol of the Gilded Age, ravaged by time, the elements, and neglect but thankfully pulled back from the brink of disaster by its dedicated stewards, faces a bright future if the preservation recommendations are tackled aggressively within the next five years.

The study has four parts: the first section is devoted to historical background with recommendations for retention of important character defining features and building preservation guidelines. The second and most substantial part is the comprehensive evaluation of Ventfort Hall and its grounds, including building fabric, infrastructure systems, and regulatory considerations. The third part addresses handicapped access and life safety recommendations while the fourth part includes outline plans and specifications for repairs, cost estimates for treatment recommendations and major improvements, and a plan for cyclical maintenance. The appendix includes historic images of the building and resources used in the preparation of this report.

We have projected a budget of approximately \$1.1 million to implement the most critical emergency treatment recommendations, including life safety issues. Additional urgently needed envelope and life safety repairs total nearly \$4 million. The balance of recommended envelope and interior restoration work plus site improvements brings the estimated grand total to \$6.2 million.

The estimated annual maintenance budget is \$24,500 with a recommended sinking fund of \$63,000 per year as a set-aside for future capital projects. Vigilant ongoing maintenance and a plan for consistent savings are crucial to the continued life of Ventfort Hall. A limited annual investment will help control the scope and cost of future repairs and saving for known capital improvements will assure that they are executed.

### Historic Background

Ventfort Hall and its history represent a microcosm of the cultural and social changes sweeping American life in the twentieth century. Envisioned as a bucolic country estate in the fashionable town of Lenox, with attendant expectations for enduring heritage, Ventfort's actual story is one of untimely death, dashed hopes, continuing

re-invention, and ultimately renewal. Saved from demolition in 1998 by a stalwart group of truly dedicated individuals, today Ventfort is a historic house museum owned by the Ventfort Hall Association (VHA). Open year round, its heritage is celebrated by guided tours, programs and events offered by the staff and volunteers.



Vent Fort, the Haggerty villa. Built 1853.

Ventfort Hall was the successor to an earlier residence on the site, an 1853 Italianate villa built for Ogden and Elizabeth Haggerty as an escape from New York City during the summer months. Prominent guests of the day added to the allure of Lenox as a choice retreat. Perhaps most poignantly, Robert Gould Shaw of abolitionist fame courted and married daughter Annie Haggerty, enjoying the pleasures of Vent Fort (“Strong Wind”) and dying just three months later as he led the fatal assault of the Massachusetts 54th Regiment of African-American soldiers on Fort Wagner.

The original Vent Fort building succumbed a few years later in 1891 when George Hale Morgan and his wife Sarah Spencer Morgan purchased the property for \$120,000. The villa was moved across

Walker Street and was succeeded by a new structure that preserved the name but condensed it to one word. Designed by the well known firm of Rotch & Tilden, the new Ventfort Hall had markedly different aspirations. After the trauma of the Civil War, the social and economic life of much of the United States experienced dramatic change – the old rich became richer, and new fortunes were created. Building technology underwent corresponding changes as construction techniques, craft and artistic production proliferated and inspiration was drawn from international sources. In design, historicism and eclecticism dominated architecture and landscape.

Ventfort Hall typified the social aspirations of American gentry. The English Revival design recalled ancient lineage, the masonry walls and slate roof conveyed permanence, and the landscape with its specimen trees, vistas, and exotic flowers spoke of romance. All together, Ventfort’s attributes conveyed status, prosperity, and taste. Inside, the relative restraint of the exterior gave way to studied opulence. Three full stories provided 28,000 square feet of living space, with grand reception and entertainment rooms allied with 15 bedrooms. A full modern working basement supplied food preparation and storage, a wine cellar and even a bowling alley. Modern heating provide by a coal fired boiler and gravity hot air system was supplemented by 17 fireplaces. Bathrooms with the most up-to-date plumbing, electric and gas lighting, an elevator, and even a burglar alarm ensured the comfort of the family and guests.

Construction commenced in the autumn of 1891, but it was not until June 1893 that the Morgans were able to show off their grand house. The interior spaces were fitted out in a variety of styles, furnished luxuriously, and decorated artistically. The

local paper, *The Valley Gleaner*, described Ventfort Hall as “one of the most luxurious finished this year at a cost of \$900,000 including the grading of the grounds.” At its height, the Ventfort Hall estate comprised the main house and pleasure grounds, a walled garden with greenhouses, a 122-acre farm across from the main property on Walker Street, gatehouses on Walker and Kembel Streets, and a large carriage house and stable. These structures featured the same picturesque English Revival style and red brick/brownstone construction with slate roofs of the main house.

Sadly, Sarah Spencer Morgan had only three years to enjoy Ventfort. She died in 1896 and three years later, George H. Morgan married Sarah Learned Mifflin. With George’s death in 1911, the Morgan children’s decision to auction off the contents and rent out Ventfort Hall began the saga of highs and lows that characterized its 20th century life. Fortunately the first tenants, the Bonsals, chose to purchase the house and 22 acres of the estate in 1925 and renamed it Pembroke House. The cost was \$103,000, a far cry from the \$900,000 spent to construct it just three decades earlier. And in 1945, the property sold again – this time for \$22,500. It ceased being a domestic residence and became a dormitory for Tanglewood students.



Five years later it was sold again and became a summer hotel known as “Festival House;” notably, the frontage land on Walker Street was subdivided as house lots. Festival House was a kind of free-spirited place with hootenannies featuring the likes of a young Pete Seeger. The fire escape on the east elevation along with a first floor kitchen extension later known as the “pizza kitchen” were added during this period. Festival House was also known as the first integrated hotel in the Berkshires. The artistic impulse continued with the Fokine Ballet Camp from 1976 to 1976. With the occupancy of Ventfort by The Bible Speaks, Ventfort entered a difficult period as the long slide of deferred maintenance and hard use continued. By 1991 the once proud mansion was in such a state that the new owner planned to demolish it and building a nursing home. Sections of exterior walls and roof were literally in collapse. In 1997 the Ventfort Hall Association rallied to purchase the property and thus began its ascent from near ashes.

The story of its construction and life through the 20th century provides good insight into why saving Ventfort has proven to be such a herculean effort. After two major world wars and the influence of powerful social and economic forces, the bleak looking house seen in the film *The Cider House Rules* was truly authentic. The grounds were covered in unchecked volunteer growth, and sections of exterior walls and roof had collapsed. When the Association acquired Ventfort in 1997, keep-

ing the water out was the first task. Three intensive years of structural repairs and interior restoration occurred before the mansion was open to the public for the first time in 2001. In the ensuing fifteen years, large sums have been spent on stabilization and restoration efforts. But big challenges lie ahead.

### Conditions at Ventfort Hall

Preservation of a historic structure like Ventfort Hall has significant challenges.

Designed to convey a sense of permanence, the structure now communicates real

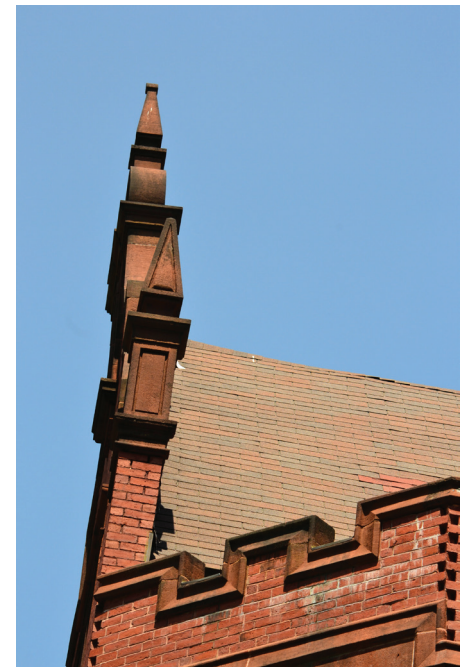


concern for its future. The reality is that lack of maintenance and inherent design and construction flaws make for a near lethal combination. The lack of maintenance was probably in effect for the 50-odd year period between the Bonsal ownership and the purchase by the Association. During that time, the slate roof was replaced with asphalt shingles for the sloped roof planes and rolled roofing for the numerous flat roofs. The roofs are now well beyond their useful lives.

But it is the masonry that is most troubling. In addition to large areas of open joints, there are places where the outer wythe of bricks can literally be removed by hand from the walls. The main cross gables are in the most dire condition. Although the northwest gable was rebuilt, it is clear that the other three gables are in extremely poor condition. To understand the problem, a good start is a review of the method of construction and ornamentation. The exterior brick walls extend vertically well beyond the roof line itself forming shaped gables, also known as Flemish gables. This convention was a well known design feature of 16th and 17th century

European domestic and institutional structures. What distinguishes Ventfort architecturally is part of its downfall: the elaborate and weighty brownstone capstones and finials that surmount the gable. In addition, it is not clear how the exterior walls connect to the roof framing – if at all.

Another curious aspect of Ventfort is the construction cycle itself. Construction began in the autumn of 1891 and continued until October 1893. Allegedly Sarah Spencer Morgan was intent on showing off her country retreat as soon as possible. With the design aspirations of Rotch & Tilden architects and the Morgans' social ambitions, the contractor, MacNeil Brothers of Boston, was under considerable pressure. It



is possible that cold weather conditions may have compromised the mortar used for laying up the walls. Recent mortar analysis identified natural cement as the binder. As this mortar can take over a month to cure, it is possible that imperfect control of temperatures during curing may have compromised its long term structural integrity. Indeed, evidence of ice crystals has been found in several mortar samples. Subsequent efforts to repoint areas using Portland cement have further compromised conditions.

Water management off the roof and the ground itself are competing issues with the masonry needs. The sloped and flat roofs are failing. While management of roof run-off is acceptable for the east wing, the main block is seriously compromised with non-existent gutters for all practical purposes. At ground level a high water table and inadequate site water management have caused serious deterioration of window areaways rebuilt as recently as 1998, as well as dampness in the cellar – once the realm of kitchens and food storage, the domestic engine of the house as it were.

Inside the house, quite extraordinary efforts have reconstructed wasted woodwork and deteriorated plaster. But roof problems have left their marks in staining and deterioration of what had been restored over the past twenty years. Attention on how the house is used – guided tours, lectures and events, occasional function rentals – has resulted in the introduction of life safety measures in varying degrees, from paper exit signs to illuminated versions and most dramatically, a sprinkler system.

Apart from the exterior envelope issues, the biggest challenge facing Ventfort Hall in the near future is the requirement to install a 4-stop elevator to provide full access to each of the four floors of the building. Currently, the north entrance, sheltered by the porte-cochere, is accessible via a rather awkwardly constructed but serviceable wood ramp. An accessible restroom is available on the first floor. Doorways are wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair. In 2006 the Ventfort Hall Association applied for and received a number of variances, including a scheduled variance to allow time to raise the funds for an elevator. Subsequently the deadline was extended to October 2016. A brief reprieve is now in place for the final design plans and actual construction of the elevator, scheduled to begin in 2017. As part of the installation, some amount of work on the easterly end of the second floors, the area known as Caroline's Suite, will require attention as it is in very poor condition structurally and has missing plaster finishes and woodwork.

The mandate to provide access to all four floors brings with it other challenges. Currently only the first and second floors are restored and used by visitors and staff. While the basement level offers some interpretive opportunities as the former site of food production, servants' activities, and the bowling alley, serious restoration and repairs, including a foundation drainage system, will be required before it can be



seen by visitors. The topmost third floor, once the domain of guests and servants, also has challenges. Here emergency egress requirements would engender rigorous changes, including enclosed, fire rated staircases. Ultimately the full installation of a fire suppression system will allow greater interpretation of the building code for life safety purposes.

Recent determinations by the local building officials have required the Association to install a fire suppression system at the basement level as well as a rated one-hour ceiling to help contain flame spread. However, there is no active connection to water. Currently a Siamese connection on the east elevation would need to be fed by water from a pumping trunk to activate the system. Therefore, an additional requirement is that the system have a dedicated water line installed near term, and that any further building renovation efforts be served by extending the fire suppression system to those areas.

### **Recommendations & Cost Estimates**

Perhaps the biggest challenge facing Ventfort is not so much figuring out how to properly treat the masonry, structural, and roofing problems as these are within the realm of skillful architects, engineers, and contractors. Indeed, the biggest challenge is one that has troubled past stewards – finding critical financial resources to preserve, restore, and rehabilitate Ventfort Hall. Achieving the goals of extending the useful life of Ventfort, making it safe and inviting, and allowing it to achieve its mission as an educational resource and heritage site, requires an investment of about \$6.2 million. Five phases are envisioned starting with immediate structural stabilization of the cross gables, roof repairs, the elevator installation and critical life safety work, followed by comprehensive building envelope work, and then interior restoration. Further improvements comprise site work, including relocation of the parking area, planting of tree and shrubberies, and restoration of stairs and walkways.

*The figures below have been rounded for convenience. The itemized cost estimates can be found on page 123 of this report.*

#### **Phase IA:**

Critical Emergency Envelope & Life Safety, Elevator & Related Work (2017)	<b>\$1,073,875</b>
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#### **Phase IB:**

Urgent Building Envelope and Life Safety Work (2018-19)	<b>\$3,932,110</b>
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#### **Phase II:**

Continuing Envelope and Interior Restoration (2020)	<b>\$536,518</b>
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#### **Phase III:**

Continuing Envelope and Interior Restoration (2021)	<b>\$388,892</b>
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**Phase IV:**

Continuing Envelope Restoration (2022)	<b>\$95,463</b>
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**Phase V:**

Site Improvements (as the opportunity presents itself)	<b><u>\$213,785</u></b>
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<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$6,240,634</b>
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Past stewards of Ventfort Hall have juggled finances creatively with gifts from private individuals and foundations, and grant support from the Massachusetts Historical Commission, the Lenox Community Preservation Act and the Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund. The annual operating costs are barely supported by income from visitation, rentals and events, in spite of the dedicated efforts of the staff and trustees. It is clear that a concerted capital campaign is needed without delay.

There are parts of the building and site that are not safe to the public, notably the shaped or Flemish gables. Structures North, structural engineers, in a letter dated December 16, 2016 called for their stabilization in the most urgent terms, warning of possible catastrophic failure with potential damage to people and property. The Ventfort Hall Association followed up promptly with the initial structural findings in August 2016 with an application to the Massachusetts Historical Commission for emergency funding but had not received a response as of February 2017. At the same time, the pressures of the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board with the elevator installation requirement have put almost overwhelming pressure on the staff and trustees of the Association to act with dispatch or face daily fines.

**Creating a Vision**

In the past, saving Ventfort Hall was the immediate need. The extraordinary efforts of a dedicated and loyal group of supporters stopped the planned destruction and building of a nursing home on the site. The need to act decisively was oftentimes accompanied by budget driven considerations; as a result, some of the work was less than enduring. At other times, the work did not fully address the design issues that would have contributed to a longer life fix. At still other times the actual causes of deterioration were neither fully understood nor addressed. For example, investments in the areaways and walls dormers of the east wing in 1998 are now fully and dramatically gone. So now, a new generation needs to embrace both quality and longevity of work as well as expediency:

- To make that work, full understanding of the sources of deterioration and the remedies is necessary.
- To make that work, careful attention to selecting, specifying and implementing work is necessary.
- To make that work, addressing life safety and other building code mandates is necessary, to be accomplished in ways that both respect the architectural historical heritage and the people visiting Ventfort.

- To make that work, comfort is required. Long term heating and ventilation solutions and sensitively installed lighting are elements of comfort.
- To make that work, a beautifully preserved historic building is required.

In times when expediency seems to compete with immediate gratification, a preserved Ventfort Hall can be a living example of refinement and civility, of aesthetic pleasure, and of craft and artistry.

## METHODOLOGY

The Master Plan represents a collaborative effort between Spencer & Vogt Group (SVG) and its consultants: Structures North Consulting Engineers (structural engineers), Quantum Engineering (mechanical engineers), Cenaxo (cost estimator), Highbridge Materials Consulting (mortar testing) and the stewards of Ventfort Hall. The Hall was represented by Rachel Coll.

The project team was assembled and directed by Lynne Spencer, partner and preservation principal at Spencer & Vogt Group. Lynne performed on-site investigations and photography with the assistance of principal Arthur Vogt, AIA. Annotated drawings, conceptual design, and plans and specifications were prepared by architect Susan Hurst and architectural designers PuiSan Ng and Nick Curtis. Preservation planner Lynn Smiledge was responsible for historic research, writing, editing and assembly of the final report.

SVG assessed conditions at the building envelope and interior and documented them with narrative and photographs. The consultants conducted surveys and prepared reports on their respective areas of study and provided treatment recommendations.

All photographs were taken by Spencer & Vogt Group unless otherwise indicated. The final report was issued both as a printed document and in electronic format as a portable document format (pdf). Six hard copies were delivered along with a compact disc.





NORTH  
ELEVATION



SOUTH  
ELEVATION

## BUILDING DESCRIPTION





North elevation - photo montage. 2016.



South elevation - photo montage. 2016.

## EXTERIOR

The architectural description of Ventfort Hall that appears below was closely adapted from the narrative contained in the 1993 nomination form for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

The hall is an imposing example of English Revival architecture designed by the prominent Boston architecture firm of Rotch and Tilden. Rectangular in form, the 2 1/2 story building is elaborated with projecting bays, dormers and porches. It is of red brick construction laid in Flemish bond with a brownstone porte cochere and brownstone trim including lintels, sills, cornices, belt courses, niches, finials and crenellation. It rests on a granite foundation. The building retains copper flashing, gutters and downspouts and elaborate leader boxes.

The building features an exuberant array of details. Its gable roof, once slate and now asphalt shingled, is enlivened with five large shaped gables (Flemish gables) and thirteen gabled dormers. Five massive chimneys, each containing multiple flues and ornamented with brick chimneypots, extend on either side of the roof ridge. Decorative elements include niches and finials on the prominent shaped Flemish gables, crenellated parapets on flat-roofed towers and bays, paired and triple-grouped windows with multi-light sash and stained glass, and Tudor arched entries.

With the projecting and receding planes created by their angled bays and entrances, the north and south elevations are similar. Fenestration throughout the building is asymmetrically arranged – singly, in pairs, and in groups of three – to create a dynamic rhythm. Generally, it includes plain single light sash set beneath Tudor arched transoms. The transoms contain intricate leaded patterns and stained glass at the first story of the facade and west elevation. There are completely leaded triple windows at the first story at the north and east elevations of the tower and a single completely leaded window at the third bay from the left at the north elevation. All of the windows are set within brownstone enframements. The taller window openings on the first story are topped by flat, projecting lintels. Belt courses divide the stories.

The north elevation (facade) fronting on Walker Street has a single story, flat-roofed porte cochere supported by round arches. It is of brownstone/cast stone construction. A three-story crenallated tower at the eastern end contains a secondary entrance.

The south elevation, oriented toward the terraced lawn, is fronted along two-thirds of its length by a broad porch enclosed by a low balustrade and supporting a flat roof, also with a balustrade. The porch is constructed of wood.

The west elevation is centered around a gable peak and two rectangular window bays. A brownstone capped brick wall that once enclosed a terrace projects from this side of the building. The east elevation is basically flat with little fenestration except at the projecting tower.



West elevation. 2016.



East elevation. 2016.

## INTERIOR

The exceptionally well detailed interior includes 28 rooms, 13 bathrooms, and 17 fireplaces. The first floor comprises spaces for entertaining, including a ballroom and library. The main entry (Great Hall), which extends through the building from north to south, is a soaring two-story space dominated by an elaborate carved oak staircase, oak panelling, a graceful second-story arcade, and extremely intricate coffered plaster ceiling with pendants. The other primary interior spaces – the aforementioned ballroom and library, parlor, dining room, separate reception areas for men and ladies, and six bedroom suites – are also richly appointed with panelling, elaborate carved wood and stone fireplaces with marble inserts, wall sconces, massive oak doors with original brass hardware, ornamental plaster ceilings, stained glass and leaded sash, and built-in cabinets and inglenooks. Ample servants quarters, rooms now used for storage, are located on the third floor.



Dining Room, first floor. 2016.



Great Hall, first floor. 2016.



Library, first floor. 2016.



Salon, first floor. 2016.



Great Hall. 2016.



Billiard Room, first floor. 2016.



Mr. Morgan's Bedroom, second floor. 2016.



Lilac Room, second floor. 2016.



North and west elevations soon after completion in 1893. Note the walled terrace and awning at the west elevation and the upper balustrade at the porte cochere.



South and west elevations. Ca. 1895.

## BUILDING HISTORY & ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The cultural history of Ventfort Hall – from its construction in 1893 and occupancy by the Morgan family, through periods of reuse and then vacancy, to impending demolition, and ultimately to its revitalization and introduction to the public in 2000 – is vividly documented in numerous publications. These resources are included as appendices to this report, which focuses on the physical history of the hall.

Designed by the prominent Boston firm of Rotch & Tilden, the hall exemplifies the Jacobean Revival style that was enjoying a surge of popularity among the wealthy owners of Gilded Age country houses. The style drew inspiration from the period of the English Renaissance (1550-1625) and is characterized by shallow Tudor arches, shaped gables and parapets, stone trim around windows and doors, crenellations, leaded windows, tall chimneys, and occasionally towers or turrets. The south porch is a distinctly American touch – a vernacular form added to a formal English country house. Along with the porte-cochere at the facade, the porch is Classical Revival in spirit.

### Construction and alterations

Work began on the hall in Fall 1891 and the foundations were completed by November of that year. The Morgans officially opened Ventfort Hall to the public with a ball in October 1893. In acknowledgment of its architectural significance, *American Architect & Building News* featured the mansion in the February 1894 issue.

The hall was constructed of hand struck red brick, Longmeadow brownstone and Pennsylvania roofing slate. None of the slate has survived. Although numerous alterations and renovations took place at the hall's interior over the life of the building, very few changes were made to the exterior. The brick wall-enclosed terrace at the west elevation seen in early photographs was removed at an unknown date and then reconstructed in 2007 in conjunction with masonry work at the west wall. The earliest documented change took place ca. 1950 when part of the south wall was removed and a modest shed-roofed wooden addition built to accommodate what became known as the pizza kitchen. The elevator shaft was closed up around this time and presumably, the brick headhouse at the roof removed. The pizza kitchen was taken down in 1998 after the Ventfort Hall Association (VHA) acquired the building.



North elevation in 1997. Note the missing shaped gable (over missing sash at second story) allowing damaging water penetration to wall and interior.

In the 1970s, when the hall was in use as the Fokine Ballet Camp, the original columns and balustrade at the south porch were replaced with simple, square pine pillars and a simple railing. This was presumably done because the wooden porch elements had deteriorated. The slate was removed from the roof during that period and replaced with asphalt.



North and west elevations. April, 1998. Masonry work in progress at north elevation. Porte cochere partially covered by a tarp. A remnant of the original terrace wall can be seen at the red circle.

In 1997 the VHA embarked on an aggressive campaign to stabilize and restore the building, which had been vacant since 1986 and was in seriously deteriorated condition. After a structural engineering study was performed, work began with the installation of rubber roofing on flat roofs and the introduction of new utility lines. In an area spanning between the tower and first large shaped gable at the north elevation, the veneer brick was removed and rebuilt. Masons found that the face brick had little or no support to the back-up wall and was laid with very thin mortar. Unsound sections were rebuilt and where needed, additional brick was salvaged from the base of the south porch.

The missing shaped gable was reconstructed and its brownstone trim removed, cleaned and reinstalled. Replacements for the missing stones were cut from pieces

of the deteriorated west side balcony. The roof framing was reinforced, asphalt shingle roofing and flashing were replaced, new copper gutters were added and several original leader boxes reinstalled, and roof drains were rerouted.

Structural reinforcement and restoration of the hall's sumptuous interior began and proceeded simultaneously with exterior work.

The poor condition of the masonry walls first discovered at the north elevation proved to be widespread as restoration proceeded in other areas. Tjasa Sprague, author of the 1999 MPPF Completion Report on masonry work, stated that the quality of the brickwork in the supporting walls was found to



South elevation. Wooden shed-roofed "pizza kitchen" addition removed. 1998.

be variable, with voids behind areas that had failed and ties used sporadically and carelessly. Occasionally the brick courses varied from side to side and considerable variation in texture and size of the original brick was observed. “Presumably the mansion was built in two years and the variation in the quality of the work and the missing brick in the backup walls suggests that the work was done by many masons with varying skill.”

The south elevation where the pizza kitchen addition had been removed was addressed next. The area of missing brick was refilled and the adjacent diagonal dining room wall was rebuilt. The masons encountered the same problem here that was seen on the north elevation – veneer brick detached from back-up brick. Most of the original face brick was reused in these repairs but it was necessary to add about 20 percent new brick using a locally produced material that was close in color and texture to the original.

In 1997-98 the porte cochere roof was structurally reinforced and rebuilt but continued to leak. The following year the structure was shored up with wood supports, but by early 2000 the stones began to shift. The structure was disassembled and the stones cleaned of white paint and then reinstalled. The porte cochere was rebuilt on a new foundation with new cast stone balusters built to replicate the originals. The arched roof balustrade seen on early photographs was not recreated; remnants of original upper balustrade stones were found in 1999 behind the carriage house. In 2007 a permanent new ceiling was installed.

Temporary improvements were made at the facade in 1999 when it was used as an exterior set for the movie *Cider House Rules*. Work began the same year on the south porch, which was in very poor condition. A new masonry foundation and brick base were completed



North elevation. Porte cochere shored up prior to disassembly and reconstruction. 1999.



Fabricating finial ornament for south elevation gable peak.



South porch shored up. April 2001.

in anticipation of complete recreation of the original porch design. The stained glass windows at the entrance foyer and mezzanine were repaired and reinstalled (or replicated?). Ground floor joists were reinforced for museum load requirements. Oil tanks and the old steam heating system were removed and a gas line introduced to supply three hot air furnaces. The west wall was shored after a small collapse and unsecured face brick and brownstone were removed.

In 2002 the restoration of the south porch was completed. The structure and details were recreated based on historic photographs and a single extant original baluster. The original ceiling boards and copper floor plan were reused but membrane roofing replaced the original metal. The wood was painted to match the brownstone color of the house as it appeared in early images. The stone steps at the porch were rebuilt with cast stone balusters and a new carved stone top rail; the baluster molds were created from a plaster model based on early photographs.



West elevation. July 2007. Rebuilding the west wall.

Additional masonry repairs took place in 2007-2009, including rebuilding of the west elevation and installation of new carved stones over the north entrance. A new basement entrance was created along with a new foundation for an eventual front gateway.



# LENOX HISTORICAL COMMISSION

6 Walker Street, Lenox, Massachusetts 01240

October 23, 2023

Tom Delasco, CPC Chairperson  
6 Walker Street  
Lenox, MA

Dear Community Preservation Committee,

This letter is in support of the Ventfort Hall request for funding to restore the four massive chimneys on the mansion's roof. The amount requested is \$156,686. It will be used for their highest priority structural restoration: rebuilding and restoring the four chimneys on the east and west sides of the roof ridge. This is the first of several phases of masonry work outlined in their Master Restoration Plan (a summary of all of the masonry work will be included with the application), that is critical to saving the building for years to come.

Located in the Lenox cultural district close to local inns, restaurants, stores, theater and music venues, Ventfort Hall attracts more than 11,000 visitors to the Town each year. Since rescuing it from destruction in 1997, the Ventfort Hall Association has maintained and continued to restore this landmark estate, a magnificent example of early 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture and a museum dedicated to the history of the Gilded Age, a significant period in the history of Lenox.

Accelerating deterioration of some of the mansion's key structural elements now require immediate attention. The LHC urges the CPC to support Ventfort Hall in its efforts to restore and preserve this exceptional landmark.

Thank you for your consideration of this request,

Olga Weiss  
Chair CPC



October 9, 2023

**Executive Director**  
Diane Pearlman

**Board of Directors**  
Karen Zink, *President*  
John Lawrence R , *Vice President*  
Nathan Graham Davis, *Treasurer*  
Chuck Walker, *Clerk*

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Andrew Schneider  
John Toole  
Cynthia Wade  
John Whalan

**Community Preservation Committee  
Town of Lenox**

Re: VENTFORT HALL – CFF APPLICATION 2023

Dear Community Preservation Committee:

I am writing in support of the request by Ventfort Hall for a grant from Lenox Community Preservation Act funds to restore the four massive chimneys on the mansion roof.

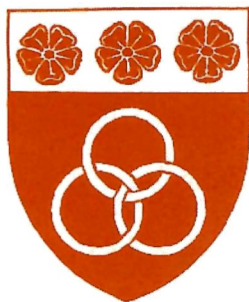
Located in the downtown Lenox Cultural District close to local inns, restaurants, stores, and theater, Ventfort Hall brings more than 11,000 visitors to the Town each year. Since saving it from destruction in 1997, the Ventfort Hall Association has maintained and continued to restore this landmark estate, a magnificent example of early 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture and a museum dedicated to the history of the Gilded Age, a significant period in the history of Lenox.

Ventfort Hall hosts numerous arts and culture events that bring tourists and support the local economy. It has served as the location for several films, including: *Cider House Rules* (1997), *The Man Who Killed Hitler and Then the Bigfoot* (2017), *Onyx the Fortuitous and the Talisman of Souls* (2022), and *Blind Man's Buff* (2023, Confidential, not yet released). The film industry in Lenox is growing, and with magnificent historic locations like Ventfort Hall to offer, it promises to continue to do so.

Accelerating deterioration of some of some of the mansion's key structural elements now require immediate attention. I urge the Community Preservation Committee to support Ventfort Hall in its efforts to restore and preserve this exceptional landmark and share it with the public.

Sincerely,

Diane Pearlman, Independent Producer & Executive Director  
Berkshire Film and Media Collaborative



# Trinity Church

88 Walker Street

Lenox, MA 01240-2725

(413) 637-0073

October 4, 2023

Community Preservation Committee

Town of Lenox

Dear Committee Members:

I am writing in support of the request by Ventfort Hall for funding from Lenox Community Preservation Act funds to restore the four massive chimneys on the mansion roof.

Ventfort Hall brings more than 11,000 visitors to the Town each year. Since saving it from destruction in 1997, the Ventfort Hall Association has maintained and continued to restore this landmark estate, a magnificent example of early 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture and a museum dedicated to the history of the Gilded Age, a significant period in the history of Lenox.

Accelerating deterioration of some of the mansion's key structural elements now require immediate attention. I urge the Community Preservation Committee to support Ventfort Hall in its efforts to restore and preserve this exceptional landmark and share it with the public.

Ventfort Hall is one of the jewels of the Berkshires and we fully support its funding.

Sincerely,

Eileen Mahoney

Administrator



**LENOX CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**  
Lenox, MA The Berkshires

October 2, 2023

Mass Cultural Council  
10 St. James Avenue, 3rd Floor  
Boston, MA 02116-3803

**RE: VENTFORT HALL – CFF APPLICATION 2023**

Dear MCC Facilities Fund Grant committee:

I am writing in support of the request by Ventfort Hall for a grant from Lenox Community Preservation Act funds to restore the four massive chimneys on the mansion roof.

Located in the downtown Lenox Cultural District close to local inns, restaurants, stores, and theater, Ventfort Hall brings more than 11,000 visitors to the Town each year. Since saving it from destruction in 1997, the Ventfort Hall Association has maintained and continued to restore this landmark estate, a magnificent example of early 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture and a museum dedicated to the history of the Gilded Age, a significant period in the history of Lenox.

Accelerating deterioration of some of the mansion's key structural elements now require immediate attention. I urge the Community Preservation Committee to support Ventfort Hall in its efforts to restore and preserve this exceptional landmark and share it with the public.

Sincerely,

**Jenn Nacht**  
Executive Director  
Lenox Chamber of Commerce  
[jenn@lenox.org](mailto:jenn@lenox.org)  
413-637-3646

