

The Record

COLUMN



GARRET A. HOBART IV
Scion of a historic family

College stirs family memories

By Jan Barry
Correspondent

For Garret A. Hobart IV, last Saturday was a day full of memories for a man whose name evokes the sweep of history.

"I remember coming here as a child," he said of Hobart Manor, now the centerpiece of William Paterson College.

Hobart, 53, was visiting the campus in Wayne to videotape recollections of life at the neo-gothic castle, which the college is restoring to its turn-of-the-century elegance.

The college is kicking off a fund drive for the restoration of the main rooms in the manor, part of which was built in 1877 by a Scottish wool merchant. The Hobart family, which acquired it in 1902, added on to it.

Hobart's great-grandfather was Garret Augustus Hobart, the 24th vice-president of the United States. He was elected on the Republican ticket in 1896 along with William McKinley, but Hobart died in office in 1899.

Glancing around the former family sitting room in the airy, fieldstone mansion, Hobart recalled another era.

"If he'd lived, he would have been president of the United States," he said, alluding to the assassination of President McKinley in 1901, an event that elevated the new vice-president, Theodore Roosevelt, into

See **COLLEGE** Page 20

Family recalled on college visit

From Page 1

the White House.

Garret Augustus Hobart was 55 when he died after a lifetime of hard work that took him from a Monmouth County farm to Paterson, where he rose from law clerk to affluent corporate attorney and state senator before he was 40.

His wife, Jennie Tuttle Hobart, grew up in Paterson and personified another side of Victorian public service, as founder of the local Red Cross chapter and of a children's day nursery for mothers working in city factories.

In 1925, she donated the family's art collection to the city library. That collection is now on exhibit at the college's Ben Shahn Galleries.

Prominent in the collection are full-length portraits of the walrus-mustached vice-president, wearing a black frock coat, and his wife, resplendent in a white gown, pearls, and a proud coil of white hair.

Hobart recalls talking as a child with his great-grandmother, who had helped run social affairs at the White House for the ailing Mrs. McKinley.

She was in her 90s when young Hobart visited the mansion in the hills overlooking Paterson and the distant New York City skyline. "She was still very much in charge of family affairs," he said.

After Jennie Hobart and her son, Garret Jr., died in 1941, the mansion and 200-acre estate were sold by the family to the state for the new site of Paterson State Teachers College.

"It's gone for a very good public use," Hobart said Saturday, after a tour of the restoration work underway. The 40-room building served for many years as the college's administration building.

Hobart, a retired lawyer who formerly lived in Morris-town and now runs a sheep farm in Vermont, said he was glad to see that the office cubicles that for years had subdivided the ballroom and main dining room have been removed. Those rooms have been reopened for public receptions. Other parts of the sprawling mansion still house college offices.

Hobart, who served for years on the board of the college's development fund and as counsel for the Passaic County Historical Society, said he had last seen the house in 1976, when it was named to the national register of historic places.

The family was devoted to public service, Hobart said.

"Along with wealth came social responsibility," Hobart said of the family heritage.