

After 7 Years, Brown Still Seeks to Sell Bristol Tract

By JAMES T. KAULL

Brown University has two parties interested in acquiring some of its long-dormant 470-acre Mount Hope Farm in Bristol, a spokesman reports.

Given to Brown seven years ago by the Haffenreffer family, the farm includes some of the state's choicest acreage, fronting on Mount Hope Bay.

F. Morris Cochran, university vice-president and business manager, noted that upwards of a dozen persons or groups have previously made overtures about using the land for housing, but nothing ever happened.

He did not identify the two parties currently showing interest.

Brown has given up any idea of subdividing and developing the land itself, Mr. Cochran said. "This is a specialty, calling for capital investment for roads and services," he said.

The two principal stumbling-blocks Brown has encountered during its effort to dispose of the acreage are:

Continued presence of the Army's Nike Hercules missile radar control center atop Mount Hope, right in the middle of Brown's holdings.

Drainage features and rock formation on the farm that make use of individual septic tanks difficult and that might necessitate an overall sewage disposal system at the expense of a housing developer.

The farm, including the Haffenreffer Museum of the American Indian, was given Brown in late 1955 and early 1956 by the late Mrs. Rudolph F. Haffenreffer and her sons, Rudolph F. Haffenreffer 3rd and Carl W. Haffenreffer. There were no restrictions on the gift.

Brown is actively using and intends to keep the museum and some of the land, but has

always aimed to make money by selling a large part of the acreage. The only land sold thus far was a plot to J. Louis Giddings, professor of anthropology and director of the museum, who lives next door to it.

On March 14, the Bristol Planning Board discussed a proposal to develop about 50 acres of the total 470 as a public wildlife preserve. During the informal session, G. Mason Gross, a Brown trustee and Bristol resident, said he thought the university would be willing to help.

Mr. Cochran said recently he had no information on such a proposal and had not discussed it with Mr. Gross.

"If we could afford it, we'd like to keep the farm for natural wildlife, since we're conscious of the needs for that sort of thing," the vice president said. "If we could sell some areas, we might be able to split off some that could be used for wildlife."

But Mr. Cochran emphasized that Brown has made no plans in that direction and that its immediate goal is to sell as much as possible.

"Our policy is to sell land when it comes to us if we can't use it," he said. "At the moment, we have two parties interested in acquiring considerable parcels."

The university itself drew up a 15-lot development known as the Pokanoket Plat and made a tentative approach to the Bristol Planning Board a few years ago, but withdrew the proposal in the fall of 1961. Mr. Cochran said four or five persons were interested in homesites, not a sufficient number to warrant going ahead.

The Nike control center atop Mount Hope seems to put a damper on development interest, Mr. Cochran said. The government's defense needs limit the possible use of Tower Road, which leads from Metacom Avenue into the farm, he said.

The Brown spokesman stressed that the university is not debating the defense needs, nor is it inquiring how long the Army will hold onto Mount Hope.

According to town records, the United States holds title to 8.21 acres on the hill, plus 19-100ths of an acre in a small waterfront strip.

In addition, Brown leases about 15 acres to the government, for \$1 a year, to provide certain entry and access rights.

The actual launching site of

the Hercules missiles, a mile and a half distant on Ferry Road, is not involved in the Mount Hope Farm dilemma.

With the future somewhat indefinite, Brown isn't sure which areas or how much square footage it wants to keep with the museum, according to Mr. Cochran. That decision might depend on whatever a purchaser has in mind, he said.

At present, the museum and the surrounding land are used by Brown for academic purposes, such as field studies in anthropology, geology and botany. The farm and beach are available to students for recreation.

The Haffenreffer family acquired the property in the early 1900s. Not included in the gift to Brown and retained

by the family was the historic Governor Bradford House, built before 1744.

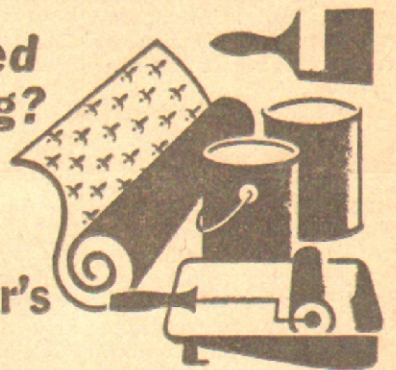
Much earlier, Mount Hope was the retreat of Metacomb or King Philip, chief of the Wampanoag Indians. Tradition says he had his throne atop the hill.

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