

## The Bradley Palmer Mansion:



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[U.S. National Register of Historic Places](#)

[U.S. National Historic Landmark](#)

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### Architecture:

Willowdale Estate is a Craftsman and Tudor Revival Stone Mansion, commissioned in 1901-1902. Bradley Palmer spent a good deal of time deciding where to build his “modest cottage” and settled on the affluent town of Topsfield, where there was plenty of land to exercise his horses. The architect was Charles Kimball Cummings (1870-1955) who practiced architecture in Boston from 1897 to 1947 and was well known for his house designs, particularly those of substantial scale for the wealthy of that era. Palmer drew his inspiration for the house from the Mansions and Castles of Aberdeen in Scotland. He incorporated motifs from the Medieval Period into the Arts and Crafts style- creating a very eclectic home.

The house features the original red slate roof, original leaded stained glass windows, stone-carved fireplaces, images of Knights and Kings, and intricate wood molding. There is a strong equestrian theme throughout the house through carved and glass imagery, quotations and even the layout of the house is in a horseshoe shape.

Bradley Palmer’s home was renovated in the 1920’s to create beautiful entertaining spaces by adding a formal Dining Room, Great Room and a Conservatory. Visitors to his estate included the Prince Edward VIII and President William Howard Taft.

From 1937 to 1944, Palmer donated all of his land holdings “to the people of Massachusetts as a place to enjoy the peace and beauty of river, woods, fields and hills.” He transferred all ownership of his properties to the State with the stipulation that he would lease back 107 acres including his mansion – for the remainder of his days. The Bradley Palmer State Park continues Mr. Palmer’s legacy of conservation and every year is enjoyed by thousands of equestrians and outdoor enthusiasts.

The house is currently owned by the State of Massachusetts and is being restored and leased as part of the Department of Conservation’s [Historic Curatorship Program](#). Willowdale is a shining example of private and public partnership.