contiguous acres held in conservation easements placed by a group of property owners in the 1980s.

Sweeping views and majestic rural beauty suit the single-minded, visionary projects that run in the family. His father, the late Francis H. Cabot ’49, a financier and self-taught horticulturist, spent decades creating extraordinary landscapes. Stonecrop Gardens, a plantsman’s haven and horticulture school in the Hudson Valley, is open to the public; Les Quatre Vents, and the elder Cabot, star in The Gardener, a 2018 documentary. “He explains how he got into gardening; because he’d had business reverses and then he found out he loved this and he could do it—and do it right,” Cabot says of his father, who also founded the Garden Conservation and helped preserve old mills. “His art involved setting up liminal spaces, preparing for transporting surprises: ‘Aha! Moments.’”

Although Cabot never spoke with his father about the concept of the numen “as a prereligious divinity,” he says they both felt what renowned British gardener Penelope Hobhouse says in The Gardener, which he paraphrases as: “when you’re in the presence of something that is so beautiful that you can’t believe it’s an accident or just evolution, the numen is present.” Both men approached their living creations with that aesthetic in mind, he adds: through a “making process as a piecemeal development without a master plan: letting the site speak to us over time.” Sanborn Mills Farm, though, also has an externalized purpose: “I strive to find a vocation—making a craft school, using the mills as practical machines—whereas he was making an intensely private expression of his personal vision.”

**Workers employ draft horses and oxen at Sanborn Mills Farm.**

Cabot followed his father to Harvard, where he concentrated in English literature and immersed himself in theater, participating in more than 40 productions, and served as president of the Harvard (now Harvard-Radcliffe) Dramatic Club. In hindsight, though, he says he feels that he “wasted” his Harvard education, and was “scarred” by that tumultuous period on campus; he feels angry and disillusioned by the University’s actions during student protests (see “Echoes of 1969,” March April, page 52). He then spent two “miserable” years at the Business School, failing to graduate, and left Harvard for Milwaukee with his then-wife and fellow theater practitioner, Marie Kohler ’73, to be closer to her family.

There, he served as assistant to Clair Richardsson, the brilliant, erratic co-founder of the Skylight Opera Theatre, before spending a year abroad working for another larger-than-life personality, the opera composer Gian Carlo Menotti. He then returned to Milwaukee to become the Skylight’s managing director, and for 12 years built the company, expanding both the staff and the annual budget (from $150,000 to $1.8 million). “I loved the theater. We had a wonderful time, it was a family—a community of people and we worked hard and made things happen,” he says. In 1989, however, feeling burned-out, he “retired” to take a volunteer post, chairman of the campaign to build the Skylight’s new performance space. The grand 358-seat Cabot Theatre, a replica of an eighteenth-century European opera house, opened in 1993.

By then, he and Kohler (they have two grown daughters) had divorced and he had married Dewey; the two met through the theater and periodically performed as a cabaret duo: she sang and he accompanied her on the piano. Because the theater-building had ended and because “artistic people and nonprofits need change,” he and Dewey in 1996 began eyeing a move to Boston to pursue graduate degrees (urban planning for him, Celtic studies for her), and second careers. Then a friend showed them the fateful real-estate listing for Sanborn Farm. Resurrecting pre-Industrial Revolution machinery (“as a tribute to the