

Westchester Landmarks: From Castle to White Castle



Adaptive re-use may take a medieval structure like The Castle on the Hudson in Tarrytown (above) and transform it into a castle of a very different kind, a White Castle.

By Michael Molinelli

A lot of people may be feeling as though they have too much house right now. If your home is feeling too commodious, you are not alone. During the 19th and 20th centuries, the well-to-do built immense romanticized castles and sprawling mansions. A couple of generations of wealth division, plus a permanent income tax first introduced in 1913, and these homes became too large for living and too expensive to maintain. Some fell into disrepair; some were subdivided or demolished, and others were transformed in ways better suited to the lifestyles of today.

Historical landmarks distinguish themselves because of their beauty and grandeur. Some become commercial establishments that marry a stately environment with exquisite catering. They are a chance for us to experience a slice of the lifestyle of people for whom it was an everyday experience to dine in tuxedo and tails. (Fortunately today, they just draw the line at shorts and t-shirts.) Grand staircases, big fireplaces, romantic gothic or classical detailing are served up with apple and celeriac soup topped with Maytag blue cheese or Chateaubriand for two Béarnaise.

Abigail Kirsch at Tappan Hill or Equus at The Castle on the Hudson are both within stones throws of each other in Tarrytown. (Yes, it depends on the size of the stone and the arm of the thrower. Don't hit the leaded art windows!) Tappan Hill is a series of glorified stone Dutch barns with their gabled roofs colliding in a radial pattern that opens up to the scenic Hudson views. Since 1990, blander catering halls have been added, but Kirsch's cuisine and the view are savory. The Castle on the Hudson was built like a Norman fortress by General Howard Carroll and greatly expanded in 1910. Like medieval cita-

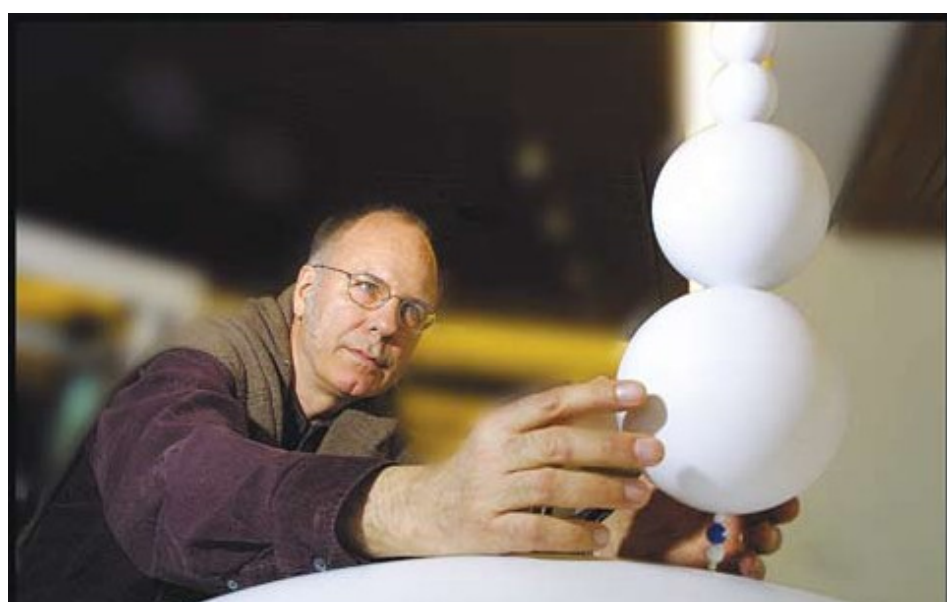
dels of old, lesser quality buildings surround it (the current hotel) and just beg a raiding horde to burn them to the ground. Equus, the five-star restaurant, moved into the mansion in 1997 and serves a chocolate facsimile of the castle as a dessert.

Le Chateau in South Salem, which started as the home of J. P. Morgan's minister, was built as a grand romantic Tudor edifice. The heavy stone first floor is topped with dark amber half timbers and framing in-filled with more stone. The restaurant was opened in 1973 by a couple from Brittany and exudes easy elegance — just remember to order your dessert soufflé du jour before the main course.

Adaptive re-use is the architectural concept that preserves the best of the past while allowing the building to contribute to a new society. The buildings are vital economically and not just museums unto themselves. My favorite example is the Pantheon in Rome (the coffered dome with a hole in the roof) which was adapted from a Roman temple into a Christian church albeit not a restaurant...yet. Paris is always changing buildings into art museums. The Louvre was the winter palace for the King Louis before it was transformed into a museum. Don't credit an architect with this transformation; it was achieved by a guillotine. More recently, the Musee d'Orsay (housing an impressive impressionist collection among others) opened in an old, yet grand train terminal building.

So, if you are finding your house a tad too spacious, consider your options. If nothing historic has occurred there (and a 300 at Wii bowling does not count), then maybe your future lies in a scaled-down version of the castle housing a five-star restaurant. Perhaps your McMansion will make a great McDonalds.

Astronomy Weekend at the Hudson River Museum



Astronomy Weekend will feature internationally known artist Tom Shannon, who will display his painted view of space.



Pendulum Painting will be one of the featured events at Astronomy Weekend.

National Astronomy Day, April 24, expands to Astronomy Weekend at the Hudson River Museum in Yonkers. On Saturday, April 24, and Sunday, April 25, from 12 to 5 p.m., all ages are invited to the museum and its Andrus Planetarium to share the sky and its fascinating sights. Astronomy Weekend offers internationally known artist Tom Shannon who paints his view of space, rocket building and a rocket launch, a new star show and astronomy-related activities.

Local Students Walk for a Cure



Tuckahoe High School students and representatives of the Paul Luisi Foundation felt proud of their efforts to bring smiles to children of The Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital.

Tuckahoe High School students and The Paul Luisi Foundation recently donated a Nintendo Wii Fun Station (rolling cart with flat screen TV & Nintendo Game System) to the pediatric oncology ward of The Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital. The students raised this money during their Walk for a Cure 2009.

Please join the Walk for a Cure 2010 on Sunday, May 2, at Parkway Oval, on Consulate Drive in Tuckahoe. Registration will take place

from 10:30 to 11 a.m. and the three-mile leisurely walk begins between 11 a.m. and 12 p.m.

There are no registration fees although donations are gladly accepted. All proceeds will benefit The Make-A-Wish Foundation of the Hudson Valley.

For more information, call Diane at 914-714-4251 or visit www.thepauluisifoundation.org.

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