

ON THE MARKET

A house that immigrants built

The physical demands of piecing together a stone cottage in the 19th century, such as this six-room home built in 1881 on a Washington hillside, must have been a consuming, even depleting, task for both the body and the brain. But the story within the house reverberates well beyond its heavy masonry. The home, constructed by the Hanning family from Sweden, represents the stories of many im-



An 1881 stone cottage was built by one of the many Swedish immigrant families that settled in town.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

migrants who built the homes, neighborhoods, and municipalities that helped to build the United States of America. Even in rural Litchfield County, immigration was a significant part of its development, and perhaps no immigration to Washington was as impactful as that of people from Sweden. “William and his wife Annie Hanning



Even in the foyer of the stone cottage, the masonry gives evidence of masterful craftsmanship.

lived in the stone house on Barnes Road in Washington after coming to the United States,” read a write-up that was part of “Coming to America: Washington’s Swedish Immigrants,” an exhibit put together in 2013 by Stephen Bartkus, curator at the Gunn Memorial Museum. “Charter members of the Salem Evangelical Covenant Church, the couple had three children.” The family founded and joined numerous civic organizations and businesses in the town

whose Swedish immigrant population numbered 22 percent, and all that assimilation began in that stone cottage. The house has kept up with the times, as evidenced by its more recent cedar shingle roof, but it still has the blue stone terrace and original stonewalls that line the two-acre property. And the house built with fine Swedish craftsmanship is now extremely desirable, even though its first inhabitants struggled with assimilation. “Washington’s Swedish immigrants came mostly from the southern provinces,” said Inger Person, who said the immigrants were needed for their skilled agricultural and domestic labor. “The economic designation found itself along ethnic lines, there was a class system, and everyone knew their place.” Israel Zangwill’s 1908 play, “The Melting Pot,” entered that expression into the English lexicon, when it dramatized the initial strife but certain assimilation of an immigrant family in the United States. His protagonist was the Russian-Jewish Quixano family of New York, but could as easily have been the Hanning family of Washington, Conn.

IN THE DETAILS

Listing: Klemm Real Estate

Price: \$1.25 million

Bedrooms: 2 **Baths:** 3

Acreage: 2.1

Year built: 1881

Do you have a home for sale with a story? We'd love to tell it. Share with Alec Johnson at [ajohnson@rep-](mailto:ajohnson@rep-am.com)

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— By Jack Coraevio