

Cornwall 'castle' for sale

Renovated mansion with storied history on market for \$6.5M

BY RUTH EPSTEIN
REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN

CORNWALL — It's a fairy tale setting.

The property known as Hidden Valley Castle sits solitarily at the end of a mile-long driveway off Valley Road, nestled among stands of trees. The stone structure, with its turrets and gargoyles, is reminiscent of illustrations from childhood books, but this castle is very much real.

Owned by Susi Stone and Russell Barton, it is on the market for \$6.5 million.

Stone said she is a bit ambivalent about selling the building that has been home since 2019, since it reminds her of a castle near her childhood home in Germany. She said her husband, who loves renovating historic buildings — he redid the former jail in Litchfield — wasn't as interested in the romantic calling of the castle as she was.

She said it was in total disrepair when they purchased it. It had been in foreclosure and there was no heat or running hot water, the pipes had burst, the floors had buckled. They lived in the pool house while the crews were working nonstop.

When it was done, Stone reveled in her surroundings.

"Every turn was a journey back in time," she said. "I'm most amused by the land and views. There is something so magic about being embedded in nature: the birds, the waterfalls and the way the light plays on the hills."

For Barton, the joy is found in the drinking water, describing it as spectacular. He believes the quality is due to the fact it runs past the Washington reservoir. While the outside of the castle "transports you," he said, he loves



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The Hidden Valley Castle in Cornwall is on the market for \$6.5 million.



The pool house at Hidden Valley Castle in Cornwall, which is on the market for \$6.5 million.

the way the renovation, which went from one end of the house to the other, turned out. "It's a real gem."

So why are they looking to move? The couple has many interests, and for Barton, one of them is importing European sports horses. She loves to ride.

"We're farmers at heart," Stone said. "We found a farm and decided we want more of a farm life."

Besides the beauty of the house and property, both Stone and Barton became enthralled with its history. Jef-

frey Jacobson, who lives near the entrance to the driveway, became intrigued by the castle and after giving a lecture to the Cornwall Historical Society in 2010, he wrote a book titled "The Castle: A Love Story" that was published by the society in 2015.

In it, he tells how New York socialite Charlotte Bronson Hunnewell built the 8,412 square-foot mansion as a summer retreat for her and her husband, Dr. Walton Martin. After a first marriage to a ne'er do well, Hunnewell married Martin, a successful

surgeon and they appeared to have a happy life together until his death in 1949.

Jacobson recounts the couple often stood out in the small New England town. He talked to someone who remembered them always being formally attired and driven from New York by a chauffeur in Martin's 1929 Lincoln. He said Martin would occasionally be seen riding a white horse through the valley wearing a white-tailed cape with red lining.

Jacobson said the stone for the castle came from the local area and Marola Construction Company of Torrington was the builder. Barton said Hunnewell's thoughts when designing the home were so clear. "The woman had tremendous vision in the 1920s. Her vision was timeless. This is not a Disneyland castle. It has character beyond belief." Hunnewell was fixated on being part of the aristocracy and believed that true nobility lived in their country homes, said Jacobson.

Stone was delighted when, in the height of COVID, Hunnewell's granddaughter, who was 95, came to visit and chatted for hours. They were also pleased to host a visit from the daughter of the gardener who worked the castle's farm.

The mansion consists of 18 rooms, seven bedrooms, five full baths, four half baths and eight fireplaces. The property also includes a heated pool, a four-bedroom gate house, a two-bedroom chauffeur/caretaker's apartment, stone pool house, four-stall stable and private licensed helipad. Maria Taylor of Klemm Real Estate is the listing agent.

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