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Fortress Fantasy

A GRAND GREAT HALL, SECRET PASSAGeways, AND A DUNGEON TURNED WINE-TASTING ROOM ARE AMONG THE SPLENDID SURPRISES IN THIS MORRIS COUNTY MANSION

BY LAURA D.C. KOLNOSKI • PHOTOS BY MARING VISUALS

T

he first wedding held at Glynallyn Castle was that of the original owner's daughter, a grand event in 1917 on what was then known as Morristown's Millionaire's Row. Today, more than 100 years later, couples are again staging their nuptials in the storybook setting. Others have discovered that the castle and its 7.3-acre grounds make an idyllic site for a wide variety of celebrations, as well as an ideal location for filming and photo shoots.

After entering the property through iron gates, visitors find themselves in a European storybook setting, which is exactly what George Marshall Allen (1863-1941), a color printing pioneer, intended when he modeled his mansion after a 16th-century post-medieval manor house in Warwickshire, England, called Compton Wynyates. The name of the New Jersey castle, which was designed by a prominent New York

architect of the day, comes from a glen behind the property that Allen combined with his own name.

Allen spared no expense and overlooked no detail in creating his dream estate. Four-hundred-year-old oak paneling sourced from Compton Wynyates was installed in the entrance hall. Other parts of Glynallyn were made from materials salvaged from various English mansions, cathedrals, and castles and shipped to the United States for the project. The result was a three-story



masterpiece with fine architectural details, a medieval dungeon with vaulted ceilings and arches, large bedrooms with fireplaces, stained and leaded glass windows, and intricately carved wood trim. In total, the castle has more than 60 rooms and some 200 doors, some of which reveal hidden passageways.

Outdoors, Allen created a lush landscape incorporating picturesque enclaves and vistas. The transition to the interior was via a covered stone outdoor chapel with open window arches, a fieldstone terrace, and meandering steps and pathways. And, of course, there was a moat. (More on that later.)

One can only imagine the parties and special occasions that took place at the property until 1952, when new owners turned it into the headquar-



ters of a mapmaking firm called the General Drafting Company. The property was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1987 before the firm closed its doors in 1992. Four years later, a couple bought the site, turning it back into a private home, but it went into foreclosure in 2011. The following year, it sustained significant damage when Superstorm Sandy sent a tree crashing into the house, damaging stained glass windows, plaster walls, and ceilings. In all, 30 of the estate's trees were lost. But a new fate, and a transition to its current glorious life, was literally just around the corner.

Living nearby were Joseph and Catherine Cetrulo, a couple





well known around the Garden State for their restaurants—Sirena on the Long Branch boardwalk and Cubacan and Stella Marina in Asbury Park. With the latter two, the Cetrulos, who have spent years in the restaurant business in New York and New Jersey, are credited with being among the first to see, 10 years ago, the potential of Asbury's now-thriving revival. All three of the dining hot spots remain popular year-round destinations.

Joseph Cetrulo, who has served as a general contractor on all projects he's been involved in, decided not only that Glynallyn Castle would be his next family home, but that it would be completely refurbished and upgraded and then opened to the public as a special events venue. One of the Jonas Brothers and former New York Jets quarterback Mark Sanchez were reportedly among those who passed on buying the property.

"I grew up loving medieval movies with castles, and I always thought it would be cool to live in one. But I never thought it would happen," said Cetrulo, who keeps black-and-white photographs of the original castle on his cellphone. He used those photos and original blueprints as reference throughout the restoration.

"In the 1920s, the *New York Times* called Glynallyn the greatest example of Tudor architecture in the country," he said,

adding that when the drafting company owned the property, it had made changes to accommodate a commercial operation with more than 80 employees—all of which had to be reversed to turn the house back into a home and public venue. It was 18 months before the Cetrulos were able to move in, which they did in June 2014. Exterior work was completed only last year.

Cetrulo hunted through the house, locating an old door in the attic and original windows stashed elsewhere. Installing a new HVAC system was among the biggest challenges; another was repairing chimneys, which required Cetrulo to climb three stories off the ground to accomplish. Matching grout and other materials, refashing portions of the roof with copper, and doing water tests to address leaks were tedious and expensive—but essential—endeavors. An artisan was hired to restore the damaged plaster, but it was Cetrulo and his son who went all Indiana Jones to literally unearth the original moat, which they did by working from a 1920s photo.

"We used a pick and shovel and finally found it," Cetrulo recalled. "It was filled with sand and covered over. We found brick in there, which we realized we'd need to fix other parts of the house." The entire process was filmed on video. The moat was converted into a pool set amid the verdant greenery, much of it selected by the Cetrulos, again working from original

HOME SPOTLIGHT



photos. Water courses serenely through the gardens, while a limestone fountain imported from France greets guests near the front entry.

Inside, the fully restored castle boasts 18 fireplaces, a Great Hall with 35-foot ceilings, and 575 antique stained glass and old leaded windows. The original breakfast room is now the billiards room, adjacent to a cigar room and an intimate wood bar area. The main kitchen has been converted to commercial grade, equipped with a 10-burner Officine Gullo range and other appliances imported from Italy. The dungeon, with its stone staircase, is now the venue's wine-tasting room. Nearby is the Cetrulos' temperature-controlled wine cellar, which is stocked with more than 4,000 bottles.

The couple scoured antique shops throughout New Jersey and




Pennsylvania to locate appropriate medieval furnishings and décor, resulting in a museum-like atmosphere featuring gargoyles, coats of arms, and stunning artwork. Upstairs, in the restored attic reminiscent of Hogwarts, Catherine Cetrulo, a stylist, has headquartered her business, a vintage clothing and accessories showroom called And God Created Woman.

All this and more make weddings, Christmas parties, corporate gatherings, and other private events truly unique. The Great Hall can accommodate up to 150 guests for a seated dinner or 200 for a cocktail-style reception. The dungeon wine cellar can fit 40 guests for a sit-down dinner or 50 for cocktails. The second floor provides a well-appointed bridal suite overlooking the grounds. Parties are enhanced by an outdoor kitchen and bar, a wood-burning pizza oven, a koi pond, and a fire-pit area. Management can assist with bar services, rentals, and outside vendors. The first wedding held there under the Cetrulos' stewardship was their son's.

The NBC spy drama *The Enemy Within* recently shot an action scene at Glynallyn, and that was followed by a Bud Light commercial for its "Dilly Dilly" ad campaign.

"Someone who was going to hold their wedding in Scotland is now coming to the castle," Cetrulo said proudly.

The family enjoys its private space upstairs, where original bedrooms were combined to create larger rooms with walk-in closets. Each bedroom has its own bathroom suite.

The next undertaking for Cetrulo is reactivating the mansion's servants' bell system, a project he and his daughter decided to tackle while watching *Downton Abbey*. Sharing a photo she sent him of *Downton*'s Dame Maggie Smith in costume for inspiration, Cetrulo flashed a grateful smile, noting, "I've been blessed." 

Glynallyn, The Castle

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