

Hundreds Visit Kimball Castle In Gilford Started in 1897

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Source 29



A fairy tale come to life, describes this past weekend at Kimball Castle on Locke's Hill, Gilford. It is estimated that well over 10,000 rode, walked, and were even carried to inspect this famous landmark, symbol of a by-gone grandeur.

Visitors signatures filled three guestbooks and when the individual names, including children, are counted, it is expected that the number will even be higher. Guests included Dr. Eric Hanson, trustee of the estate and also trustee of Alvord Wild Life Sanctuary, and Dr. Robert Frye, overseer of Kimball's Wilderness Preserve and director of Alvord Wild Life Sanctuary.

Parked cars extended along Route 11 from the first entrance to Glendale, as far as Chanticleer Inn, and parking in the two fields below the castle was directed by young Roger Babin of Rochester, Denis Fontaine and Jimmy Lavoie.

After being queried endlessly as to the location of the castle, the proprietor of the Village store, posted a sign in the window, giving complete directions.

Former Employees Visit

People who used to work in the castle, returned to reminisce (one recalled the handsome oriental rugs which once graced the halls), and one whose father assisted in its construction, brought

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HECTOR BOLDUC, an expert on Gilford history, who worked two and a half years to make open house possible, shows a group one of the six interesting dining table chairs at Kimball's Castle. On the backs of each is carved a large face of a man. The carving is done in such a manner that the curly hair on either side of the head forms an entirely different face when viewed from the right or left profile.



MICHIGAN TRIPLETS, formerly of Laconia, were among many hundreds of persons who visited the famed Kimball's Castle in Gilford over the weekend as it was opened to the public for the first time. Left to right in left panel, admiring the breath-taking view of Lake Winnepesaukee and the White Mountains are, Elaine, Elaine and Ellen Forster. They are the daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Forster of Waterford, Mich., and grand-

children of Mr. and Mrs. Roger E. Morrison, 254-A Court St., Laconia. Castle, in panel above, was erected in 1897 by Benjamin Kimball of Concord, when he was president of the Boston-Montreal Railroad. The place is owned by the Alvord Wild Life Sanctuary of Bear Island, and it is hoped, may eventually be developed for a wild life refuge.

(Earl O. Anderson Photos)

Kimball Castle Open to Public; 8,000 on Tour

GILFORD — More than 8,000 attended the two-day open house this weekend at the famed Kimball's Castle on Locke's Hill. There were 3,000 on Saturday and more than 5,000 yesterday.

Thirty states and at least four foreign nations were represented, according to Hector Bolduc of this town, who headed the arrangements. England, Germany, Canada and Mexico were among the nations represented.

The castle tour was free to all, but many persons made contributions toward its restoration yesterday.

The castle, erected in the late 1890's by Benjamin Kimball of

Concord, railroad magnate, was estimated to have cost in the vicinity of a half million dollars to build.

This weekend was the first time in its history that it has been opened to the public. So great was the interest shown that Bolduc said it is possible that another open house might be held next weekend.

Kimball, the builder, occupied the castle summers until his death about 1930. His daughter-in-law, Mrs. Charlotte Kimball, summered there until her death four years ago.

At that time she willed the

property to the Alvord Wild Life Sanctuary on Bear Island, Lake Winnepesaukee. It is hoped that the society may eventually restore the castle and its many acres of grounds to their original condition.

Bolduc, an authority on past Gilford history, and on restoration of old buildings, and widely traveled in this country and Europe, is one of a family of 13 children.

All of them, together with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Bolduc, took part in helping to prepare the building for viewing this weekend.

He conducted tours in French and German.

Bolduc also provided some of his own collection of antiques and spent about \$2,000 of his own money for the project.

One rare item, a Sheffield ring case, was reported stolen Saturday from the room once occupied by Kimball, and because of this, extra guards were posted yesterday.

Heart Ailment

Kimball Castle Tour
Draws 8,000 Visitors

Aug 3, 1964



HUNDREDS ENJOYED the panoramic view from a porch of Kimball Castle of Lake Winnepesaukee with Welch Island in the foreground over the weekend. At one time the owner, Ben Kimball, railroad president, landscaped part of his 100 acres with shrubbery and flowers. It is hoped that the gardens may be restored to their original condition some day.

even carried. The guest register carried visitors were 95 and 92.

A bus load of 45 youngsters from Camp Fatima, Gilmanton, in charge of Father Dowd, joined the two lines which waited approximately an hour to get inside the building. People from Canada, Mexico, Germany, England, the New England States, and others such as Texas, California, Florida, Louisiana, Ohio, Illinois and New York, were waiting Saturday and Sunday before the doors opened at 9:00 a. m., and were still arriving at the nine p. m. closing.

All preparation and back breaking work was performed by Gifford, historian Hector Bolduc, whose genuine love of beautiful antiques and any and everything pertaining to the history of his native town, prompted him to work so tirelessly and cheerfully. He was tremendously happy with the crowds that trekked up the hill to view "their" castle overlooking breath-taking beautiful Lake Winnepesaukee. Caretaker Lester Deroche also gladly lent a helping hand.

Assisting their brother Hector in serving 400 quarts of punch on Saturday and guiding visitors were his sisters, Mrs. Theresa Tracy of Newington, Conn., and her three daughters, Denise, Roberta and Carol; Mr. and Mrs. Norman McKeown, Loretta and Helen Bolduc; and his brother and sister-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Bolduc, nieces Helen and Penny Bolduc, and Mr. and Mrs. George Babin, the latter of Rochester.

German Visitors
Mr. Bolduc especially delighted in escorting a German couple from a town near which the original castle was located. This tour was conducted in German as was the one of a German student who couldn't speak English.

Mr. Bolduc, who has traveled extensively in Europe, also conducted tours in French.

When we left at 9:30 last evening, he was preparing to eat his first meal since seven that morning! (His sleep the night before at the castle was interrupted by a low flying bat that wasn't interested in having company).

Valuable Antique Stolen

There was only one occurrence to mar an otherwise perfect weekend. A rare, irreplaceable Sheffield sterling silver, dresser ring-box, with cherubs on the cover and all sides, was stolen sometime Sunday afternoon. This piece, over 100 years old, was purchased in an antique shop in London, by Mr. Bolduc.

As soon as the theft was discovered, the doors were locked while visitors consented to a search. Gifford Police Officer Bob Hutchinson and State Trooper Wayne Brunt, stopped departing cars and searched them.

However, when learning of this, Mr. Bolduc ordered it discontinued as it was detaining persons waiting to get in.

It was truly a miracle that of all the costly and many priceless collections freely exhibited, that nothing else was broken or stolen. Perhaps, in time, it will be proved that the days of chivalry are not dead and the Sheffield returned to its owner.

We're sure everyone is grateful to Ben Kimball, railroad president who built the castle, patterned on one he visited in Germany, Hector Bolduc and the trustees of the Kimball Wilderness Preserve, for a departure from this busy space age world, into the romance of yesteryear.