

A New York
furniture fair
comes into its own

10

ARTS/ENTERTAINMENT

Theater: Lanford Wilson's 'Burn This,' with John Malkovich, Joan Allen and Jonathan Hogan

23

Books: Two authors look at the transformation of America since the 1960's

29

The New York Times

THE

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15, 1987

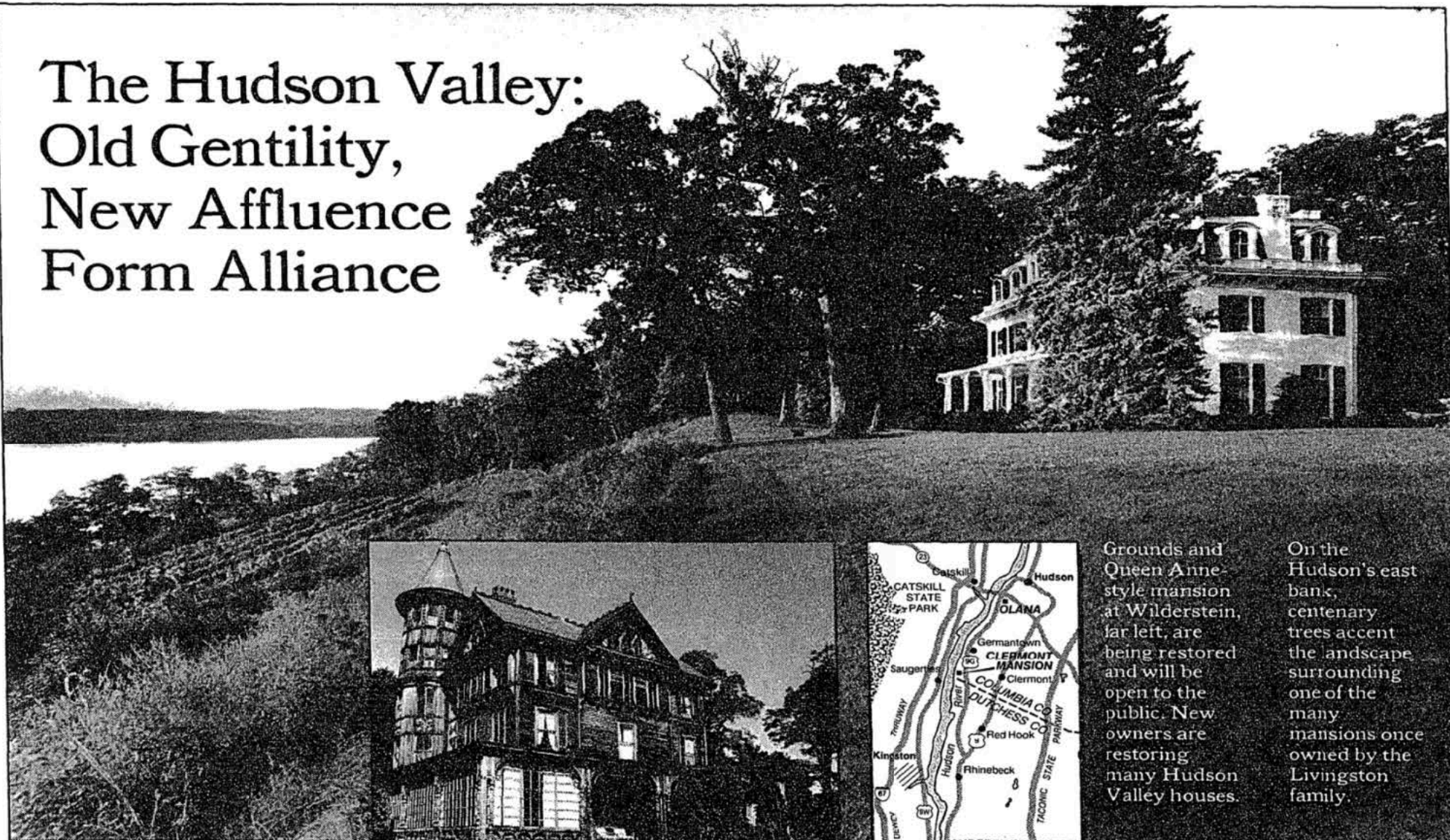
Home

SECTION

C1

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The Hudson Valley: Old Gentility, New Affluence Form Alliance



By JOSEPH GIOVANNINI

IF 19th-century Hudson River artists were to visit the back porch of the New York preservationist Joan Davidson today — or those of Count Jean de Castella or the investment banker Dick Jenrette — they could paint the same luminous scenes they captured a century ago: long views of the Catskills and the Hudson that dissolve before the eyes as the light, clouds, river and sun imperceptibly shift.

Much of the area between Hyde Park and the town of Hudson remains as the painters depicted it — and it is a secret residents would prefer to keep. But in the last several years, New Yorkers and Europeans, attracted by a post-modernist landscape of rich colors and old storied buildings, have bought year-round weekend homes in southern Columbia and northern Dutchess Counties in

New York, from the river to the Connecticut and Massachusetts borders.

For the first time in centuries, residents without family ties to the area have become the chateaus of some of the great river estates. In areas east of the river, where agriculture has declined since the war, professionals and artists have moved into farms. Even the venerable Edgewood club, said to be the oldest country club in America, has altered its membership policies to reflect the changing demography.

So far there has been a peaceful coexistence of old

and new residents. But many residents fear that the rediscovery of the Hudson Valley now transmuting it with new vitality may undo the bucolic atmosphere for which people have come — the same atmosphere captured in paintings at the Metropolitan Museum show on the Hudson River School. Even New Yorkers who have found refuge here fear newer New Yorkers.

"The major issue in the valley is development — I hope we can avoid the kind of overbuilding that priced out local people in the South Fork," said Joan Davidson, president of the J. M. Kaplan Fund, who is herself a vaca-

tion refugee from Long Island. "I think there's still a chance in upstate New York, but we're in danger because we have weak zoning."

The east bank of the river — birthplace of the New York 400 — was long a monolithic social wall, occupied by Livingstons, Astors, Roosevelts, Delafields and Vanderbilts. Income taxes and subdivisions of family fortunes, however, deeply eroded the wall during this century. Though residents like the late Helen Huntington Astor Hull returned for the tulip season and Christmas, and lived in state and style until fairly recently, others used galvanized metal buckets to catch the leaks when it rained.

"In the mid-70's, many of these houses were considered white elephants and were on the market for peanuts," said Count Jean de Castella, a Swiss investment

On the Hudson's east bank, centenary trees accent the landscape surrounding one of the many mansions once owned by the Livingston family.

The New York Times/Stephen Castagneto

Continued on Page C6

Well-Flung Pies A Smash at School

By GLENN COLLINS

Special to The New York Times

VENICE, Fla., Oct. 14 — The 20th anniversary reunion of the graduates of Clown College may not have been the world's most distinguished alumni celebration, but it could have been the funniest.

A thousand clowns have been unleashed by the eccentric institution of higher learning since its founding in 1967 by Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey, and 479 of them were here to honor their alma mater by engaging in a prodigious amount of slapping, falling, juggling, unicycling, still-walking and indiscriminate tomfoolery.

At the height of today's festivities at the circus winter quarters, they sent the clowns into what was billed as the world's largest pie fight: 120 costumed clowns in top hats, chef's toques and other outlandish headgear galumphed around, aiming assorted pastries at one another in an apocalyptic mock battle. Few people in the vicinity were left un-pied.

"We had our cake and ate it too," said a well-meringued T. H. Culhane,

a 1975 Clown College graduate.

The attendance at the three-day reunion, which ended today, delighted many graduates. "There haven't been this many clowns in one place since the Iran-contra hearings," said Irene Hackworth, a 1980 graduate who attended with her husband, Jim, and their 13-month-old son, Colin.

More than a thousand clowns, spouses and children, as well as a circus-hungry crowd from the news media, descended on this normally tranquil retirement town on Florida's west coast for the event.

Clowns arrived from 48 states in a variety of slap-happy ways. One, Sue Dwosh, had herself wrapped as a parcel and delivered to the winter quarters door by commercial air express.

Perhaps the most rollicking arrival was on Eastern Airlines flight 371, which brought 52 costumed clowns from Ringling's two traveling circus units to the Sarasota airport. They had played Ping-Pong with their tray tables for paddles, and stuffed one tiny clown into an overhead luggage rack while another, David Kiser, helped the stewardesses deliver the seat-belt announcement.

"Well, we did manage to keep them out of the cockpit," said Capt. Don



Alan Belanger, right, gives T. H. Culhane a taste of custard pie at the three-day 20th anniversary celebration of Clown College in Venice, Fla.

Grosman as he stepped from the plane.

In keeping with the reunion's unpredictability, the grand finale tonight was not to be a food fight, but an elegant banquet for 900 people.

The Clown College graduates include stockbrokers, teachers and marionette makers, as well as Garry

White, a Navy petty officer on the U.S.S. Fox, which returned from the Persian Gulf in time for him to attend the reunion with his wife, Diane, and 19-month-old daughter, Khadija.

Christopher Shelton, a 1981 graduate who toured as a Ringling clown

Continued on Page C12

Once Sales Tools, Now They're Home

By EVE M. KAHN

AFTER the army of sales agents moves on to greener territory, the developer of a condominium is often left with an obsolete sales tool: the model apartment.

This often extravagantly furnished display has become indispensable in New York as a way to attract buyers. A developer typically spends \$30,000 to \$80,000 decorating a model apartment, according to Elaine Lewis, the president of Elaine Lewis Associates, a Manhattan company that specializes in such apartments.

The developer's objective is to make the apartments look "as spacious and luxurious as possible," said Andrew Goodstein, the vice president of the Goodstein Development Corporation, which developed the Executive Plaza condominium in midtown Manhattan.

While many people like to look at models, they are rarely interested in buying them. But there are some who prefer these apartments, extravaganzas and all. They might be recently divorced people, or out-of-town seekers a pied-à-terre, or

others who, like the developers, want a vision of luxury.

Some people buy models simply because they like them. "They see all the wonderfulness," Ms. Lewis said, "and it's all there for them, as opposed to working with a designer, when you never know how it will turn out."

"If you like to decorate, I guess you don't buy a model," said Randy Seltzer, a 31-year-old entrepreneur. Mr. Seltzer moved into a one-bedroom model in the Carriage House on East 80th Street last January. Since then, he has not altered much. "I've thought about changing it around, but I don't know what I'd change," he said. "I brought a toothbrush and clock with me. That's about it."

He is particularly fond of his living room, which he describes as "very relaxing." Designed by Woody Goldfein of Interior Design Inc. in Manhattan, it has beige carpeting, peach walls and couches covered in off-white suede. Among the unusual accents are a four-foot-high statue of a bird, made of fiberglass to imitate cast iron, and a six-foot-wide Indian painting. His only contributions to the room are framed photographs of

Continued on Page C8

The Hudson Valley: Old Gentility and New Affluence

Continued From Page C1

banker who in 1978 bought and restored the Callendar House, a stately two-story 18th-century mansion. The house overlooks the site where Fulton's steamboat Clermont was launched; Franklin Roosevelt is said to have proposed to Eleanor by the pool. "Preserving the house was something I never questioned," said Count de Castella, a banker. He said that a former owner, Roland Livingston Redmond, thanked him for bringing the house back to life.

While the stately houses, with their 12-foot ceilings, are the conspicuous architectural monuments, the charming farmhouses, like the modest ancestral home of the Rockefeller family, known as "the tavern," are as old as many river houses. It now belongs to Mary Black, an art historian, and Mike Gladstone, a publisher.

Many of the houses have turned the people who buy them into preservationists. "It's a form of financial suicide," said Mr. Gladstone, glancing at the 18th-century foundations. The house, whether a mansion or farmhouse, is the fundamental unit in the community. Preserving it preserves a please-join-us-for-dinner way of life that dates from the time it was built. Friends see one another over lunches, teas or dinners quietly at home. There is no artists' colony or restaurant life and few attractive nuisances like movie theaters or watering holes to compete with long-established traditions of hospitality based on introductions.

"It's hardly glitzy here," said Beatrice Perry, a sculptor, sitting on a terrace in front of a view framed by spruce and locust trees set in carpets of lawn. "There's no competition to entertain elegantly. Nobody cares about clothes, or whether you're rich or poor." Before she and her husband, Hart, a communications executive, bought the property 20 years ago, it had not been in any but Livingston hands since time of the Indians.

The Wilderstein estate perhaps symbolizes what has, until recently, been the plight of the great river houses, and the turnaround now occurring. A tall Queen Anne with mahogany paneling and Tiffany windows, the mansion is in stately decay, with frayed wall fabric in the front parlor and an exterior that has not been painted in more than 50 years.

House, grounds and vistas are being restored as grants and fund raising permit. "The view is back to about 1930," said Daisy Suckley, a vivacious 95-year-old Livingston descendant who still occupies the house.

During the recent Trails Day, when the 35 acres with walking paths were open to the public, Wilderstein T-shirts were selling for \$5 and sweatshirts for \$10. Now owned by the Wilderstein Preservation, the house and grounds will eventually be open to the public on a regular basis.

For many of the houses, which are designed with long floor-to-ceiling windows and french doors open to the landscape, conservation of the grounds is as important as architectural preservation. According to Robert Toole, a landscape architect in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., the ornamental, naturalistic landscaping of the estates, done in the early and middle 19th century, was the precursor of such designs as Central Park.

Though the 20 miles of contiguous estates form two connected national historic districts and the stretch from Hyde Park to Germantown is a designated scenic district, the designations do not protect the areas from development. A large clustered condominium development called the Woods was built in Rhinebeck, and the developer has proposed building hundreds more. Springside, an estate in Poughkeepsie with a historic landscape by A. J. Downing, the 19th-century romantic landscape designer, narrowly escaped an unsympathetic condominium development, after conservation studies.

"My concern is respect for the land — that it not be subjected to violent change," said John Winthrop Aldrich on Trails Day. Mr. Aldrich, a Livingston descendant and an owner of the estate known as Rokeby, works in Albany as a special assistant to the State Commissioner of Environmental Conservation. "My hope is the people will buy and become protectors," he said.

"The remarkable thing is that there's been so little change so far — that we've been spared development is a minor miracle," said Dick Jenrette, chairman of the Equitable Life Assurance Society of the United States, who bought the templelike Edgewater

mansion and estate from Gore Vidal in 1969. "It's an ongoing temptation for people to sell, but everybody's held out. All the present owners are committed to maintain the green belt."

Leon Botstein, the president of Bard College, whose campus comprises the river estates Blithewood and Ward Manor, said the area is not so fragile. "The people coming in have an understanding of the historic and scenic value here," he said. "Unlike the Hamptons, the second-house culture is not overwhelming the local culture, which is authentic and strong. There's a viable local economy that will keep the area auto-

mous."

Bard College has emerged over the last decade as an active cultural center indicative of the shift in the valley's character. Perhaps more representative of the new community than the Edgewood club, it is attracting both the owners of the river homes and those who live in the areas east of the river. "We provide a bridge," said Mr. Botstein. The campus will complement neighboring Montgomery Place, the Delafield family estate now being transformed by Sleepy Hollow Restorations into a house and landscape museum.

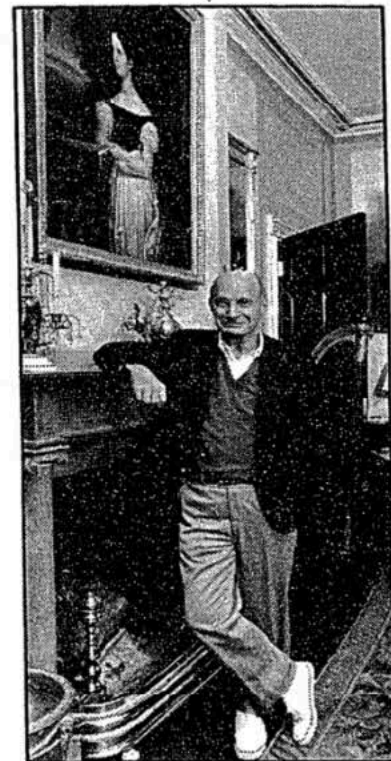
Mr. Botstein conceded that there is danger

of institutionalizing the river estates; several already house educational institutions and house museums, and others are occupied by religious groups. But he said that many new residents have invigorated the old properties with a new purpose: the estates are more than decorative landscapes with a presiding house. Count de Castella, for example, started a horse farm, and Baron Josef von Kerckerinck, operates the Meadows as a fallow deer farm.

"They've had an appreciation for both the past and its potential," said Mr. Botstein. "This isn't a museum — it's about preservation, but it's also about the future."

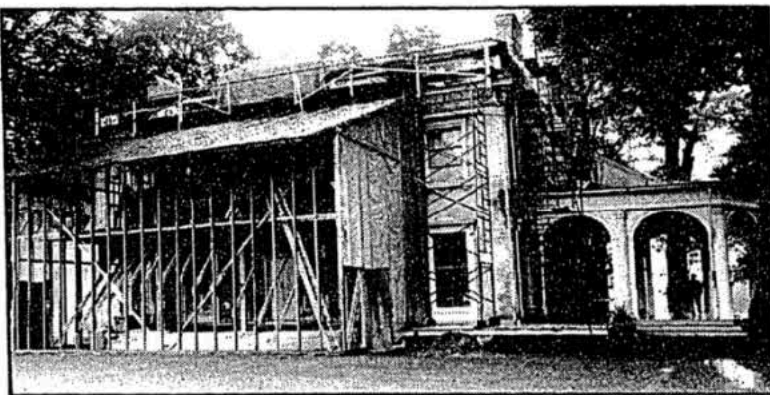
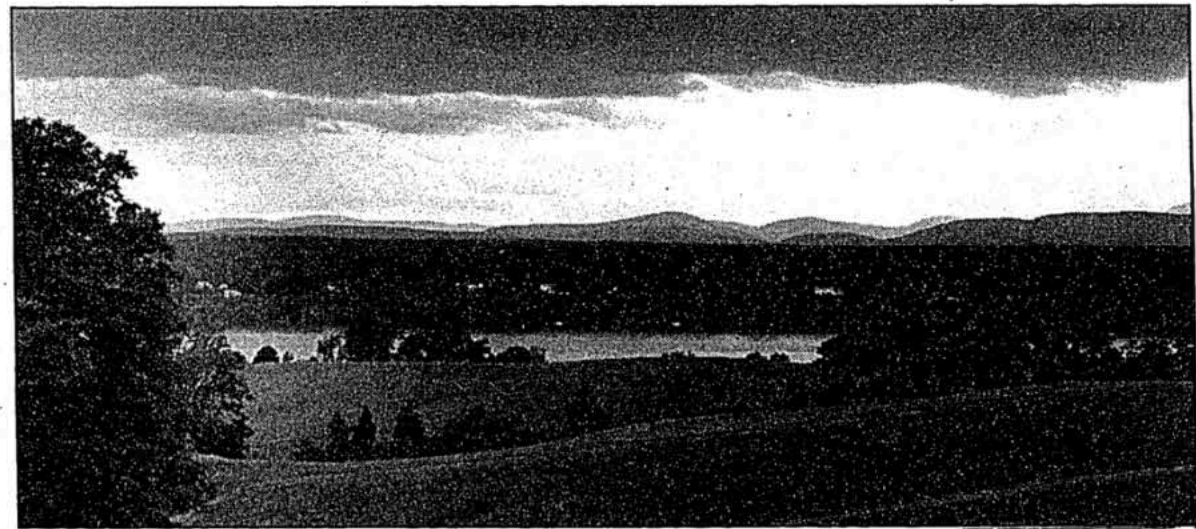


Count Jean de Castella, above, under a portrait of an ancestor at Callendar House, above left, built in 1794.

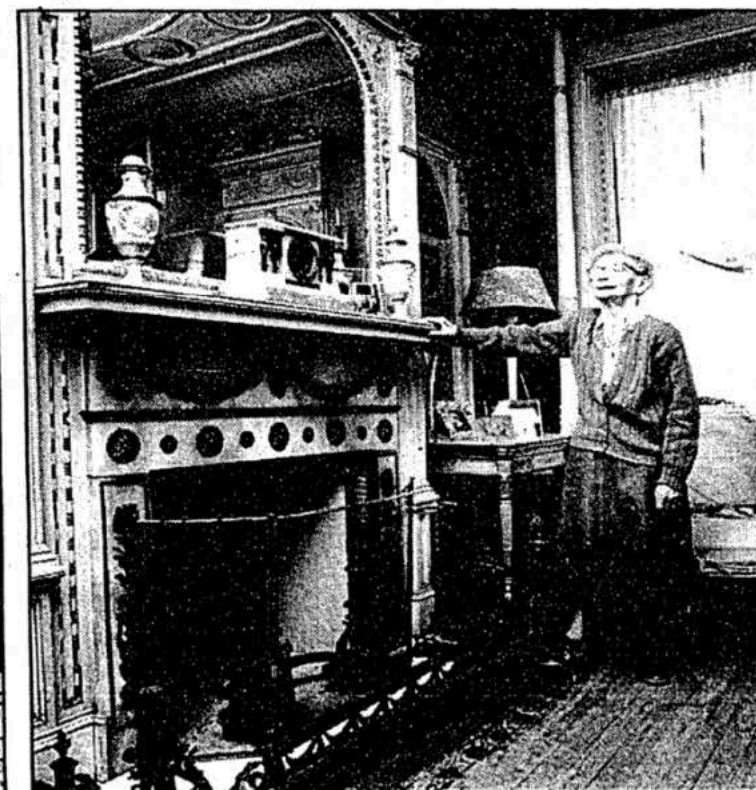


Edgewater, left, built by John R. Livingston in 1820, and now owned by Dick Jenrette, far left.

The view from a Hudson River estate, below.



Montgomery Place, above, now being restored by Sleepy Hollow Restorations as a house museum. The landscape architect Robert Toole, below, at the porter's lodge of Springside in Poughkeepsie, N.Y.



Daisy Suckley, left, in a parlor of Wilderstein, designed in 1852 in an Italianate style, but enlarged and remodeled in the Queen Anne style in the 1880's. Sconce, above, in the house, with an original wall fabric, to be restored.