

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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DATE ENTERED	

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC
MARION CASTLE, TERRE BONNE

AND/OR COMMON
The Castle

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
One Rogers Road N.A. NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN
Stamford N.A. VICINITY OF CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
4th

STATE
Connecticut CODE 09 COUNTY Fairfield CODE 001

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	N.A. IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
GORDON JULES MICUNIS and JAY ARTHUR KOBRIN

STREET & NUMBER
One Rogers Road

CITY, TOWN
Stamford N.A. VICINITY OF STATE
Connecticut

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Old Town Hall

STREET & NUMBER
175 Atlantic Street

CITY, TOWN
Stamford STATE
Connecticut

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

DATE
1982 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS
Connecticut Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN
Hartford STATE
Connecticut

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Marion Castle, an imposing 26-room stucco-covered masonry structure designed in the Chateausque style, was built between 1914 and 1916 on a prominent site overlooking Long Island Sound in the Shippan Point section of Stamford, Connecticut. Originally encompassing 4-1/2 acres, the estate now consists of 1.675 acres bordered on the south by Rogers Road, on the east by Ocean Drive West, on the north by Lighthouse Way, and on the west by private, undeveloped land which was formerly the waterfront portion of the property. Distinguished by its high, steeply hipped slate roofs, and a profusion of gabled wings and dormers, the 4-1/2 story castle rises abruptly from the property's eastern, street-front boundary line, giving the opposite, main elevation a sweeping, western view of the formal gardens and Long Island Sound beyond. The immediate neighborhood consists of single family residences on smaller parcels of land. Except for new construction to the north, most are contemporaneous to the Castle, although they are largely Colonial Revival and neo-Mediterranean in style, and of less impressive proportions.

The Castle is constructed of stucco-covered concrete and terra cotta brick set on a steel frame and assembled in the asymmetrical fashion characteristic of the Chateausque style. The main section, measuring approximately 42' by 71' in floor area, consists of a central core surmounted by a steep, hipped roof, and several projecting gabled and flat-roofed wings. There are four main floors plus two attic levels, adding up to a total height of approximately 64 feet above ground level. The northern section, measuring 37' by 41', is also surmounted by a hipped roof, but is lower in height, due to its lower second story, and only one attic level. It is dominated by a 4-1/2 story corner turret with a conical roof, and a half-timbered balcony at its northern elevation. All windows in the Castle have leaded, diamond shaped panes, and embrasured sills. The slate-covered roofs are pierced with various sizes and types of Gothic inspired dormers, and accented with copper gutters and ornate copper cresting, including a 15-foot high weathervane at the highest point of the house (Photograph #5).

The western, shore elevation (Photograph #2) presents the Castle's main facade, overlooking Long Island Sound. It consists of a high central core to the right, a gabled west wing projecting from it, and the lower north wing to the left. The ground floor shows a row of elliptically arched openings on the north wing and the west wing. Those on the north wing contain heavy oak doors, with prominent iron hinges, which open onto the flagstoned terrace. On the west wing the arches are screened, revealing the enclosed porch within. Tall buttresses project diagonally from the northwest corners of both wings. To the far right, a staircase ascends the side of the garage wing to the deck above. Below it is a window located under half of a segmental arch.

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The main floor is dominated by the tall, transomed French windows of the west wing, which open onto a small, wrought iron balcony. The windows are tripled and feature stone mullion and transom bars. To the right is the enclosed corner porch, and to the left is a row of double windows in the northern wing.

The second story shows a triple window in the gabled wing, and French doors opening onto the corner deck to the right. To the left, the lower height of the north wing is emphasized by its three wall dormers. The one next to the central gable is at the same level as the main section, while the other two are lower, giving an ascending progression from the north wing to the main section.

The treatment of the steeply hipped roof of the central core, starting at the third floor, is repeated at the south and east elevations. It rests on a course of segmentally arched machicolations topped by copper gutters and interrupted by an ornate wall dormer of Gothic design. Its croisette window has trefoil arched spandrels and is flanked by buttresses crowned with gabled pinnacles connected to the dormer's gable by trefoil arched rails. Above this dormer is a smaller, copper-clad, gabled dormer with a round arched window flanked by colonettes supporting the brackets carrying the gable ends. The highest level of the roof shows a tiny, blunt arched dormer, also constructed of copper.

The lower roofline of the north wing shows three gabled, copper dormers similar to those projecting from the central core's roof, only with the addition of cross-like finials. These dormers are arranged in an ascending progression similar to the wall dormers below them.

The southern elevation (Photograph #4) overlooks the circular entrance drive and reveals the full 4-1/2 story height of the central core, which is flanked here by one and two-story, flat-roofed wings. The ground floor contains the main entrance which consists of massive, iron-hinged oak doors located under an elliptical arch and flanked by ornate, wrought iron lanterns with pendants. To the right, the projecting, two-story service wing intersects with the high, stone boundary wall, and features a service entrance and porch located behind twin, segmentally arched openings. To the left are two elliptically arched garage doors which are located between stuccoed buttresses, and are similar to the front doors in design.

The main floor features a cross window, or croisette, with stone mullion and transom bars, located directly above the main entrance. To the left is the enclosed corner porch, surmounted by a second-story

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deck. The porch features a window with carved trefoil spandrels and elliptically arched transoms, as well as a terrace over the western end of the garage wing. The second floor shows twin double windows, while the roofline is similar to that of the central core's west elevation, minus the gabled wing.

The eastern, street elevation (Photograph #3) rises abruptly from the sidewalk along Ocean Drive West, at one level higher than the other elevations. It shows a complex of interconnecting gables and balconies. The main floor presents a continuous masonry wall punctuated by small windows. The principal street entrance is situated off center to the right, with a postern-type doorway located under a shouldered arch. Above it is a lancet arched panel with a low-relief sculpture of the "Lamb of Louis XIV." To the left is a segmentally arched double window and a service entrance.

The second story is dominated by the centrally located stairway bay which rises from a balcony bordered by an ornate stone rail with quatrefoil carvings located between two projecting gabled wings. The stairway bay features a tall, six-pane window inset with stained glass panes. To the far left, the flat-roofed service wing is surmounted by a deck bordered by a stone rail with carved, trefoil arches.

The third story features an ornate Gothic gable, similar to the principal western dormer, which surmounts the stairway bay, and is flanked by projecting gables. The one to the right is adjacent to a trefoil arched rail that encloses a balcony and extends to the conical-roofed turret occupying the northeast corner of the house.

The roofline of the main section features a high, panelled chimney with a tall, tapered cap. A similar chimney rises to the right, from the north wing. This elevation provides the best view of the ornate copper cresting surmounting the central core's roof. It consists of two mace-like finials connected by a rail with open trefoil arches. The southern finial is crowned by long-stemmed copper flowers and a 15-foot weathervane with the pointer displaying the symbol of the lamb of Louis XIV. The northern finial is crowned by long-stemmed copper leaves.

Dominating the north elevation (Photograph #1) is the half-timbered, second-story balcony which extends from the turret and proceeds around the Castle's northwest corner. It is supported by large triangular brackets and features a continuous row of diamond paned windows that are stepped in the ascending portion that encloses the stairway leading to the top floor of the turret. The roof shows a gabled, copper dormer similar to the ones on the main roof.

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The interior of Marion Castle contains 26 rooms, 5 bathrooms, and 3 lavatories distributed on 4 main floors which encompass 6 distinct levels. Included within this area is extensive storage space, many closets, and ample circulation space consisting of two staircases, an elevator, a ramp, and many hallways. There is also a partially excavated basement level, and an attic composed of 3 levels on 2 floors.

The ground floor (Page 4, Exhibit #1) includes the recreation room or ballroom, and an enclosed porch, as well as the two-car garage, two lavatories, and 3 service rooms: laundry, boiler, and maintenance. The outside doors of the main entrance, on the southern elevation, open to reveal a vestibule with double doors and sidelights, all under an elliptical arch, with diamond-shaped, leaded panes located under trefoil arches. These doors open to the main hall which features a marble floor and a vaulted ceiling consisting of intersecting elliptical arches. All doorways are recessed within elliptical arches. The west side of the hall includes the door leading to the garage wing. To its north, a doorway identical to that of the vestibule leads to the flagstone-floored, indoor porch.

The recreation room, or ballroom (Photograph #6), is located at the northern end of the hall.¹ It measures 36 by 20 feet in floor area and is 22 feet in height. The focal point is an impressive, cut-stone fireplace located within a large, elliptically arched recess on the east wall. A huge, tapered hood overhangs the fireplace and features a panel of Gothic moldings along its bottom edge. Flanking the fireplace are similar but smaller recesses. The northern one shelters an alcove which leads to the elevator, located in the corner tower. Above this recess projects the library's polygonal bay, which shows ornate, leaded windows and intricate moldings, both of Gothic inspiration. To the upper right of the fireplace is a pipe organ with a row of Gothic moldings suspended from the top of the opening. The south wall is dominated by a balcony that projects above the elliptically arched hall entrance, and is supported by ribbed vaulting. It features a rail with Gothic tracery and doorways to the living room and the main floor's hall. The outdoor terrace is reached by 4 double doors, 3 on the west wall and one on the north. The interior doors are similar to those of the vestibule. The ballroom is lighted by decorative, wrought iron sconces with their original mica shades. Similar lighting fixtures are found on the walls of the main hall and staircase. The beamed ceiling is notable for its original,

1 The use of 'recreation room' in the original plans is an especially early use of this term.

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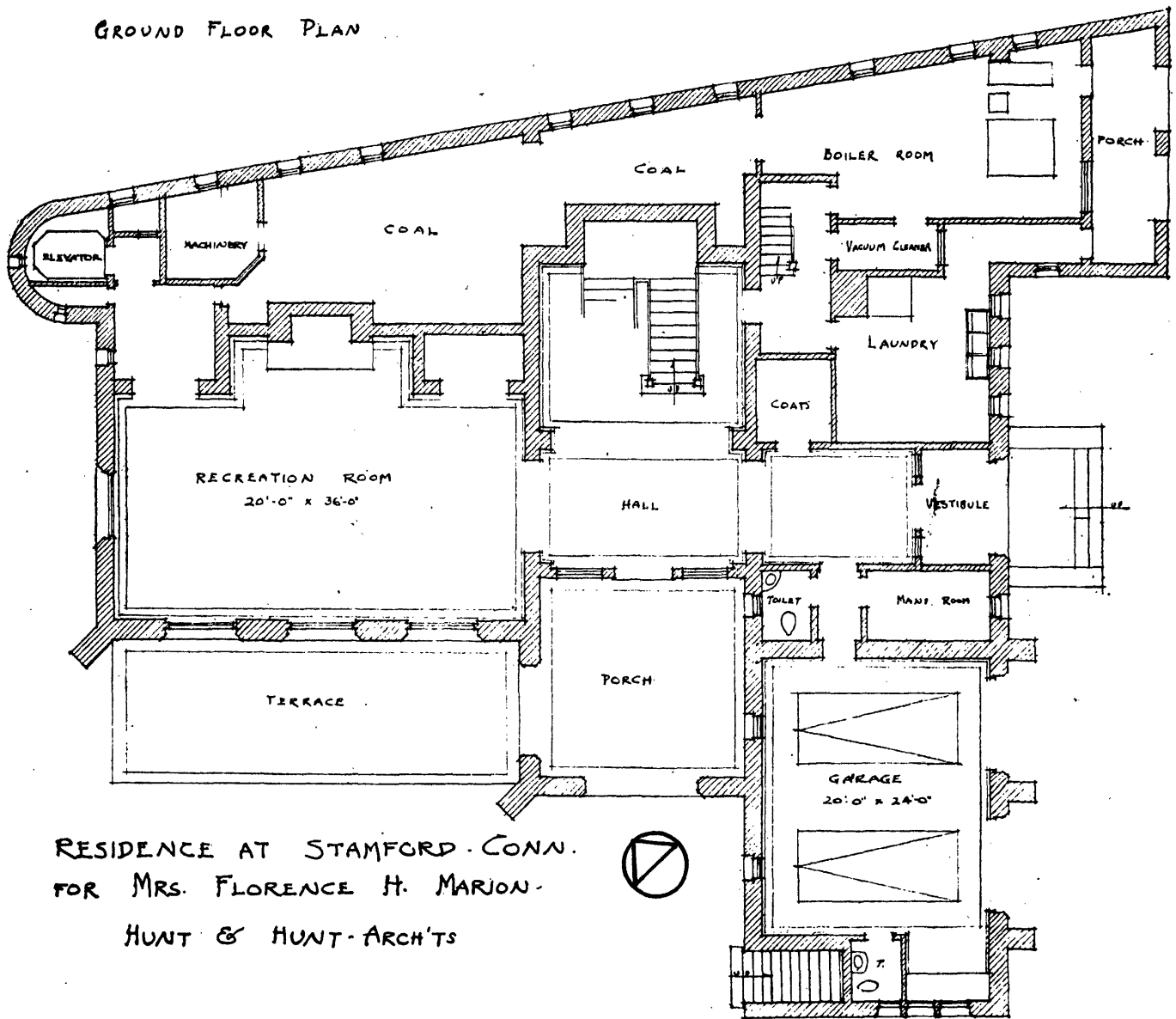
Continuation sheet

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Page 4

EXHIBIT #1

GROUND FLOOR PLAN



RESIDENCE AT STAMFORD, CONN.
FOR MRS. FLORENCE H. MARJON
HUNT & HUNT ARCH'TS

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painted designs. Underneath the floor of the ballroom and the hallway is the elongated basement level, also called the dungeon.

The east side of the hall is dominated by a wide, elliptical arch located over the entrance to the main staircase. It is flanked by elliptically arched niches containing original, wrought iron floor lamps. The staircase itself is constructed of Grey Tennessee marble and features wrought iron railings of French design that terminate at the bottom step with an octagonal marble newel post with a fleur-de-lis finial.

The main floor (Page 6, Exhibit #2) consists of the main hall, living room, dining room, indoor porch, library, and the kitchen with its auxiliary rooms. The north side of the main hall has a striking view of the ballroom below. Located nearby, on the west wall, is an orchestrion, a player organ that simulates the sounds of many orchestral instruments. It was built in Germany by the Welte Company and has a duplicate in the Smithsonian Institution.

Located on the west side of the main hall is the living room (Photograph #8). It features a red oak parquet floor laid in a herringbone pattern, and hardware of bronze dore. The panelled walls are distinguished by a foliated frieze, above which are several courses of ornate moldings, and a row of voluted modillions with foliated surfaces. The windows retain their original Venetian blinds, while the ceiling features its original alabaster and bronze dore lighting fixture.

The dining room (Photograph #9) is located off the south end of the hall, adjacent to the living room. It also has a red oak parquet floor, and panelled walls topped by rows of ornate, classical moldings. The west wall, facing Long Island Sound, shows French doors opening onto the flagstone-floored, enclosed porch. The east wall features a china closet with a built in silver safe, as well as access to the pantry which leads to the kitchen. The chandelier, sconces, and all hardware are all silver plated.

The south side of the main hall also includes an entrance to the left which leads to the service stairway, and a hall which leads to the

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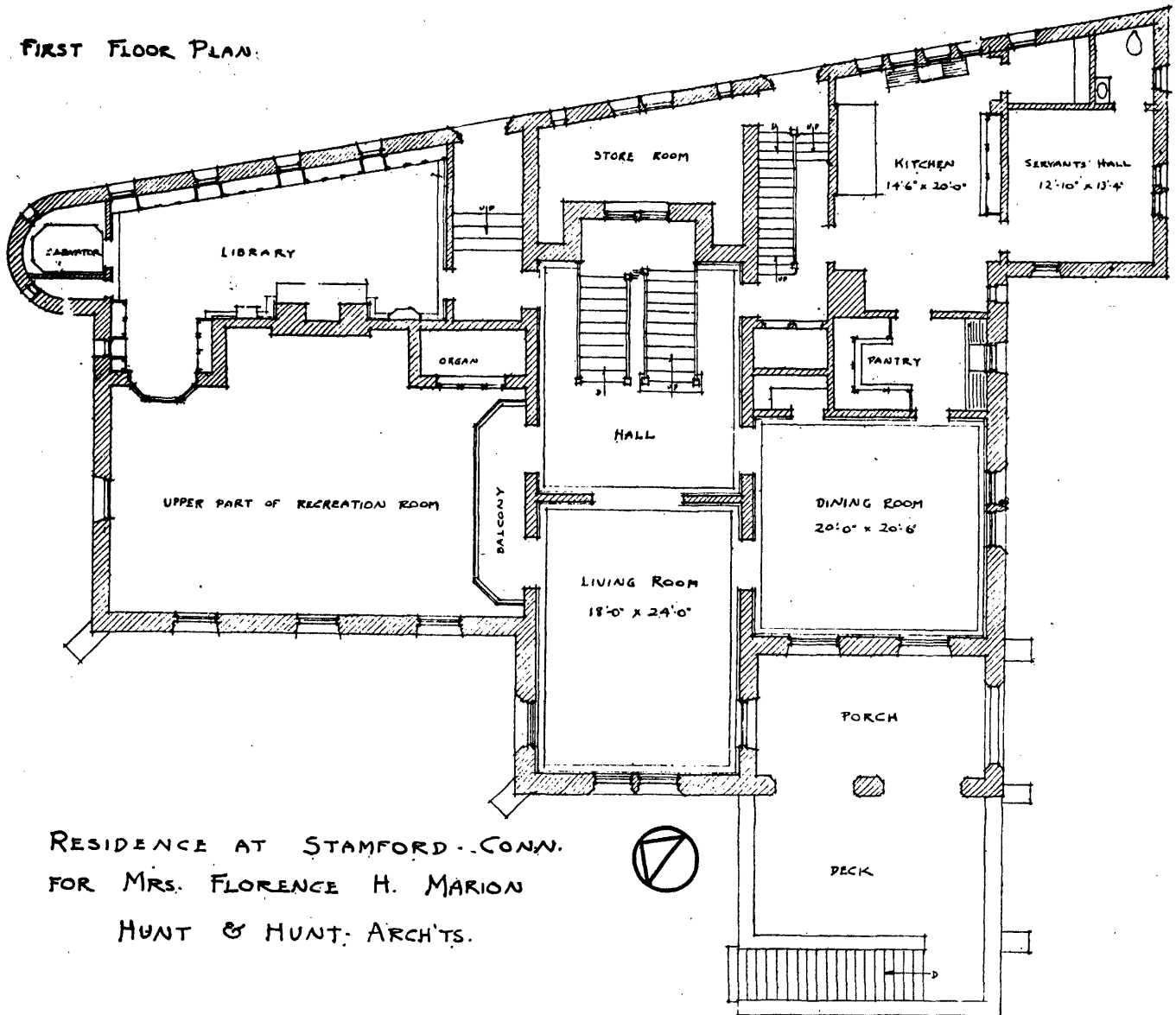
Continuation sheet

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EXHIBIT #2

FIRST FLOOR PLAN:



RESIDENCE AT STAMFORD, CONN.
FOR MRS. FLORENCE H. MARION
HUNT & HUNT, ARCH'TS.

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kitchen and the service entrance to the street. The kitchen (Photograph #11) retains its original oak cabinetry, brass hardware, and several auxiliary lighting fixtures. The refrigerator, located in an alcove to the south, is also original, as is the incinerator, in the northwest corner, and the coved stove hood which stands next to it. The servant's dining room is located to the south, while the pantry provides access to the dining room on the west.

At the right end of the main hall's north wall is a short hallway which leads to the library, and down several steps to the principal street entrance. The library (Photograph #10) has a coffered ceiling, and is completely panelled in oak, including built-in cabinets, bookshelves, and window seats, all focusing on the fireplace, centrally located on the west wall. The panelling is characterized by elliptical and trefoil arches, a motif found frequently throughout the house. Above the panelling is a frieze consisting of original oil paintings depicting an idealized version of the Marion family history. These were painted by Howard McCormick, chief muralist for the Museum of Natural History in New York City. The leaded glass windows of the east wall contain a small, round, stained glass portrait. The north wall features the entrance to the elevator, and a gilded panel inscribed with "Terre Bonne", the official name of the Castle. The alcove on the west wall contains the polygonal bay overlooking the ballroom. The bookshelves include original "searchlights," hand lamps with green glass shades used for locating books in the dark.

Dominating the marble staircase which ascends to the second story is a tall, 6-part stair light inset with early 20th century, painted Italian glass panes. These depict scenes of medieval life (Photograph #7). At the top of the staircase is the second story's main hall, featuring a coffered ceiling.

The second story contains five bedrooms, a sewing room, and three bathrooms. On the west side of the main hall is the master bedroom, originally occupied by Mr. Marion. This room features two large closets with original drawers situated on either side of the entrance to the hall. The south wall is lit by French doors opening onto a deck, while the north wall contains the doorway to the master bathroom, as well as a "secret" staircase that provides access to the bedroom immediately to its north, originally occupied by Mrs. Marion.

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The south side of the main hall contains a doorway to a secondary hallway which provides access to the service stairway and two smaller bedrooms separated by a bathroom. The east bedroom features French doors opening onto the terrace which surmounts the service wing.

The north side of the hall shows a door with a brass knocker fashioned like a hand. This door opens onto a ramp which descends to the north wing's second story, which includes a bedroom, bathroom, and sewing room on the east side of the hall, and Mrs. Marion's bedroom on the west side. This bedroom has access to the half-timbered observatory, which retains its original roll-up screens.

The third story consists of the centrally located billiard room, four servants' rooms and a bathroom along the southern hallway. It also contains a bedroom, bathroom and dark room in the north wing. The large billiard room occupies the space above the master bedroom and main hall. It is distinguished by its original, wrought iron chandelier which overhangs the space where the billiard table was located. The chandelier consists of a long bar with three suspended conical lamps inset with round mica shades depicting nautical scenes.

A short stairway descends from the billiard room to the north wing's hall, which swerves diagonally to the right, terminating at the elevator in the turret and a door opening onto a deck overlooking Ocean Drive West. Along the west side of the hall is the bedroom of the Marions' invalid son, Hamilton. This room retains the original built-in drawers and bookshelves as well as the original wrought iron chandelier and sconces. Hamilton's bathroom, to the south, features a tiled massage table used for his physical therapy.

Above the billiard room is the large, unfinished attic, reached by a stairway from the service hallway. A trap door in the ceiling provides access to the "observatory," which occupies the highest floor level in the house.

The Castle is fully electrified but gas jets are also included in each room. There is a central vacuum cleaning system, and a telephone intercom throughout the house. Due to Mrs. Marion's concern about fire, the house was fully fireproofed when it was constructed. All bathrooms

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are finished in ceramic tile and most have coved ceilings. Except for a sink in the southern bedroom of the second floor, all of the fixtures are original.

Landscaping

The landscaping of Marion Castle's grounds is primarily "formal," in keeping with the overall French design of the house. The circular driveway is entered from Rogers Road on the south, through a set of stone pillars that interrupt a semi-circular recess in the stone boundary wall (Page 10, Exhibit #3). The entry area is shaded by large Norway Maples, and is lined by a row of pollarded Linden trees on the western side. A row of Norway Maples accents the Castle's abutment on the sidewalk along Ocean Drive West, while European Beeches provide a tall, thick screen along the property's northern and southern boundaries.

To the west of the Castle, occupying most of its property, is the principal landscaped area, terraced into three levels descending from the Castle's main facade (Photograph #5). The upper level features a flagstone terrace adjacent to the ballroom, and a rectangular, built-in swimming pool, constructed in 1963 a short distance further to the west. Proceeding westerly from the indoor porch is the central flagstone walk, which is lined with five large boxwoods, and leads to a set of shallow steps descending to the middle level, which consists of the formal flower garden. Rectangular in shape, it extends across the width of the property, and is bordered on the east by a cement balustrade pierced with quatrefoil openings, and on the west by a yew hedge. The perennial plantings change color with the seasons, and are arranged in geometric shapes separated by flagstone walks. A unique, built-in watering system is set into the plantings. Another short flight of steps descends to the lower level, occupied primarily by a broad lawn which originally extended westerly to Long Island Sound. To the north is the fruit orchard, originally consisting of individual, rectangular plots of vegetables with espaliered fruit trees located at each corner. The southern edge of the lawn features a grove of Japanese Maples, in the middle of which is a sixteenth-century wellhead imported from France. Octagonal in shape, it is distinguished by low-relief, sculptured faces on each side.

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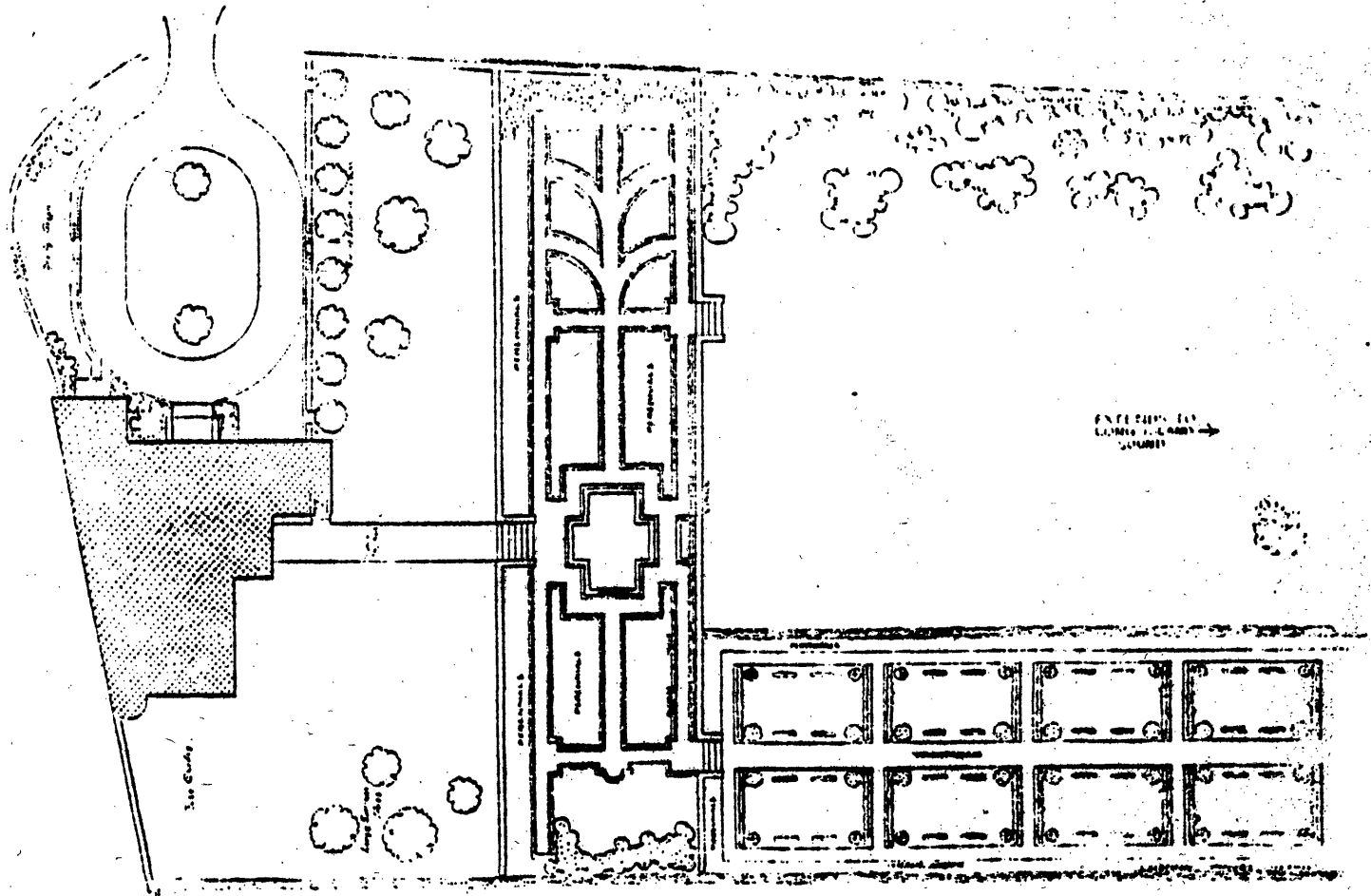
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EXHIBIT #3



THE GARDEN OF THE RESIDENCE AT SHIPPAN POINT.
Hunt & Hunt, Architects.



Architects and Builders
Hunting House, N.Y.
Planting and gardening - Walker & Smith

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Film Industry
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1914-1916 BUILDER/ARCHITECT JOSEPH HOWLAND HUNT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Marion Castle, a distinguished example of early 20th century eclectic architecture in the Chateausque style (criterion C), was designed by Joseph Howland Hunt, a partner in the prestigious New York architectural firm of Hunt & Hunt (criterion C). The 26-room structure, designed in 1914, is one of the few Chateausque buildings in lower Fairfield County, and the only known residence in this style that was designed by its architect. The original owner, Frank Marion, was a self-made millionaire who pioneered in the development of the motion picture industry (criterion B), and was responsible for such innovations as the newsreel, location shots, and the use of "extras."

Architectural Significance

Marion Castle stands today as an outstanding example of the Chateausque style, also known as the neo-French Renaissance style, which is characterized by large, steep-roofed masonry structures composed of a mixture of medieval and renaissance elements inspired by the chateaux of the Loire Valley in France. Around the turn of the century, houses of this style were considered to be expressive of cultural refinement and noble lineage, making them especially appropriate for the new millionaire, America's version of royalty. The large size and expensive masonry construction of these structures did indeed limit them to the upper classes. Contributing to their rarity was the difficulty of successfully integrating so many diverse elements in a picturesque, asymmetrical fashion. Only the most talented architects attempted such a task, most notably Richard Morris Hunt, Joseph's father, and the designer of "Ochre Court" (1892) in Newport, Rhode Island, and "Biltmore" (1896), near Asheville, North Carolina.

The design of Marion Castle and the individual elements which make it up are very much in character with the Chateausque style. Its peculiar location, rising almost directly from the street, gives the opposite shorefront side an impressive view. This is in keeping with the notion that Chateausque structures should have broad vistas and appear as imposing as their French prototypes, even within the confines of a relatively narrow suburban lot.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

SEE INFORMATION SHEET

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.675 acres

QUADRANGLE NAME Stamford, Connecticut

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

East by public road Ocean Drive West; South by public road Rogers Road; North by public road Lighthouse Way; ~~West~~ by private undeveloped property fronting on Long Island Sound (as described in the ^{West} STAMFORD, CT, Land Records, Vol. 2776, P. 310).

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE N.A. CODE N.A. COUNTY N.A. CODE N.A.

STATE N.A. CODE N.A. COUNTY N.A. CODE N.A.

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE NILS KERSCHUS

ORGANIZATION Preservation Development Group

DATE October - 1981

STREET & NUMBER 200 Henry Street

TELEPHONE 203-324-9317

CITY OR TOWN Stamford

STATE Connecticut

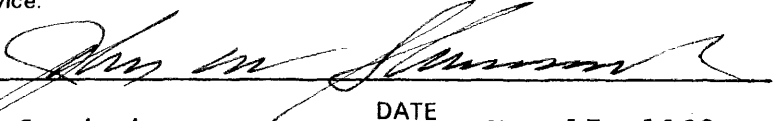
12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE



TITLE Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

DATE May 17, 1982

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

William H. Brahan
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 7-1-82

ATTEST: Patrick Andrews
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE 7/1/82

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The Castle itself is characterized by a complex, asymmetrical arrangement of hipped roofs, gabled wings, elaborate dormers, and numerous terraces, giving each elevation a unique, picturesque appearance that achieves an overall balance. Compared to other Chateausque structures, Marion Castle leans toward the more medieval aspect of the style. The elliptical or "basket handle" arch, for instance, is used extensively, rather than the more classical round arch. Also contributing to the medieval feeling is the half-timbered balcony, and the frequent use of Gothic tracery on parapets, spandrels, and rails. The only atypical feature in Marion Castle's Chateausque design is the stucco-covered, masonry over-steel construction. Chateausque structures generally were constructed of cut stone with a smooth surface designed to contrast with the otherwise rich ornamentation. This treatment, however, is closely approximated by the use of stucco. The reason for its use may be a result of Marion Castle's rather late date of construction compared to other examples of the style.

The workmanship of the individual elements of the Castle is of an exceptionally high order, and is evident not only in the more obvious elements, such as the marble stairway and the ballroom balcony, but in small details such as the finely crafted hardware and individually designed lighting fixtures. Elements of a more unique nature include the numerous Italian stained-glass panes, and the orchestrion, a player organ imported from Germany.

Apart from the Lockwood-Mathews House in Norwalk, the 1868 forerunner of the style, there are no other structures in the lower Fairfield County area that closely adhere to the Chateausque style. There are a few buildings, however, which display Chateausque elements, the most prominent being the Bishop's Residence of St. Basil's Ukrainian Catholic Seminary at 161 Glenbrook Road in Stamford. This structure, which dates back to the 1860s, acquired its high, hipped roof and pinnacled dormers during a turn of the century remodelling.

The Hunts

Marion Castle was designed by Joseph Howland Hunt (1870-1924), the younger son of Richard Morris Hunt (1827-1895), the "Dean of American Architects," and the first American graduate of the Ecole des Beaux

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Arts. Joseph graduated from the School of Architecture at Columbia University in 1894, and also studied at the Ecole des Beaux Arts. In 1901 he joined his older brother, Richard Howland Hunt (1862-1931), in a partnership which was largely an outgrowth of their father's prestigious practice. The firm, known as Hunt & Hunt, designed many palatial urban and country residences, as well as municipal and institutional structures, in a variety of eclectic styles. Marion Castle, however, seems to have been the only structure utilizing the Chateausque manner.

Lower Fairfield County was the location of at least four other houses designed by Hunt & Hunt, including two built in the same Shippan Point neighborhood where the Castle is located, at approximately the same time, c. 1914. The Robins' house, on 123 Saddle Rock Road, is a rough-stone "cottage" designed in the Craftsman tradition with Mediterranean elements, while the Cruikshank house at 80 Verplanck Avenue was designed in the neo-Classic style. In the neighboring town of Greenwich, the H.J. Fisher house on Round Hill Road was constructed in 1910, in the neo-Tudor fashion, while the J. Kennedy Tod mansion at Greenwich Point was built somewhat earlier, c. 1902, in the Shingle Style. The Tod mansion has since been demolished, although many of its numerous outbuildings remain as part of the public park which now encompasses the former estate.

In New York City, the firm completed the father's work on the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1895-1902). Other works included the mansard roofed 69th Regimental Armory (1905) at 68 Lexington Avenue; the 1st Precinct Police Station (1909), designed as a Renaissance Palazzo; the George Vanderbilt residence, of French Beaux Arts design on 647 Fifth Avenue; and the August Belmont house, a neo-Italian Renaissance townhouse at 477 Madison Avenue, which contained Gothic interiors similar to those of Marion Castle.

Other residences were built on Long Island, in Tuxedo Park, and Newport. Castlegould (1909) at Sands Point, Long Island, was designed with an English Medieval exterior, but with several interior Gothic elements similar to those of Marion Castle. Institutional buildings by Hunt & Hunt include Kissam Hall at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, and the Alumni Building and Williams Hall at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York.

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Historical Significance

Marion Castle was built between 1914 and 1916, as the summer residence of Frank Marion, the noted film producer. The total cost of the construction was over \$140,000. The general contractor was the F.H. Wakeham Co. of New York City while the lighting fixtures were from the Sterling Bronze Company. The hardware was made locally at the Yale & Towne Manufacturing Company in the South End of Stamford. The landscape architects were Wadley and Smythe, a well known firm that operated from offices in New York City and Newport, Rhode Island. Marion Castle's conspicuous location, so close to the sidewalk on Ocean Drive West, was not popular with neighboring residents when the house was being planned. Because of uncertainty whether the house could be constructed there, an entirely different set of plans was drawn up for a house that was designed to be closer to the water. As it turned out, deed restrictions did not mention distance from the street at all, and, since there were no local zoning laws at that time, the house was built with its rear elevation directly on the sidewalk, becoming the most conspicuous landmark in the neighborhood.

The Castle has had only three owners since its construction. It remained in the Marion family until 1963, when it was purchased by Mr. & Mrs. David H. Cogan. The original tract of land had been subdivided into two parcels in 1950. In 1978, the house and its inland lot was purchased by Jay A. Kobrin and Gordon J. Micunis, who are in the process of restoring it. Although some minor deterioration has taken place over the years, both interior and exterior features remain largely unaltered, especially the north wing which was closed off since the depression and remains exactly as the Marion family left it.

The present owners have in their possession the original plans, specification sheets, bills, receipts, and cancelled checks pertaining to the construction of the house, as well as much of the correspondence between the architects, general contractor, and site supervisor. There also remains a good deal of Marion family memorabilia, including old photographs and diaries.

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Frank Marion - 1870 - 1963

A pioneer in the motion picture field, Frank Marion was responsible for developing such innovations as the newsreel, the "star system," location shots, "chase" movies, war films, and the extravagant use of "extras" to augment casts. He was associated with the development of the animated cartoon, the mutascope, and a method to keep film from slipping in the projector, in competition with Edison's sprocket film. He not only produced and financed his films, but wrote many of them as well. He accomplished all these credits before he retired in 1916 at the age of 46. He was associated first with the Biograph Co., and then with his own company, Kalem, one of the first companies to move from the east to Hollywood.

Marion was asked at the beginning of WW I by President Wilson to join a propaganda committee called the "Committee on Public Information." He travelled throughout Europe, but principally in Spain, to inform the public about the "American Way of Life," through the use of film, news stories, pictures, lectures, and window displays. There was even a secret service branch run by the Navy Department in this division.

Marion retired in 1916, when his house in Stamford, Connecticut was being completed after two years of construction. Of French Canadian descent, Marion was proud of his French ancestry and named his residence "Terre Bonne," after his birth place in Canada. The oil paintings in the library also attest to his French ancestry, depicting scenes from his family's history. The Castle was Marion's summer residence until his death in 1963. During his stay there, he was visited by numerous celebrities of the theatre and related fields. In 1923, the movie Adam and Eva, starring Marion Davies, was made at the Castle.

Marion had four daughters and one son, Hamilton, who was an invalid and died at the age of 17. Several of the interior features of the Castle, specifically the elevator and the ramp, were included in the design of the house to facilitate his movement.

Today the castle remains very much a reflection of Marion's lifestyle. It shows his desire to spare no expense for a comfortable French manor house, over which he could reign like a noble ancestor, or a royal character in one of his films.

