

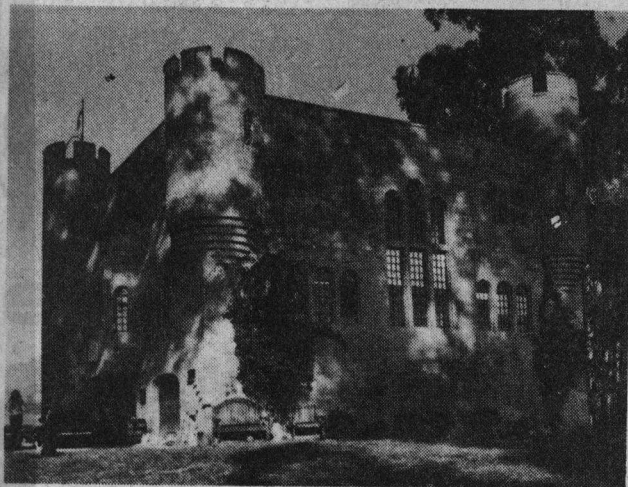
A man's castle . . .



Photo by Sam Vestal

. . . is his home, at least in the case of Watsonville's Stewart Kett, who's recreated a castle on Kelly Lake. Sunday, it was opened up for a meeting of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association. Story on page 4.

Inside the castle



A wine party few could resist

By MARYBETH VARCADOS
 "This castle hath a pleasant
 seat; the air
 Nimble and sweetly recovers
 itself unto our gentle senses."
 —Shakespeare

How many rumors came to rest on Sunday when some 200 of us finally explored the depths of Ketts' Castle?

Since its intriguing beginnings in 1970 at the far end of Kelly Lake, the castle has engendered more romantic notions than probably any other home in the Pajaro Valley. Yet its owners, Steward and Alice Kett through the years have kept their castle private as their home, opening it sparingly to their closest friends.

That the University Women had their tea at the Norman-style castle last year was a hint of a bigger event to come, and Sunday was the day. The Ketts graciously welcomed over 200 members and friends of the Pajaro Valley Historical Society inside the stone walls for a benefit wine tasting.

We had heard about moats and drawbridges and dungeons. We had heard the tale of a child's cries coming from the tower. We heard about plush velvets and secret rooms.

"I would have paid \$100 to come here," exclaimed one delighted young man who held one of the 225 \$10 tickets.

Enthusiasm over just standing in the Great Hall, or sipping wine in the anterooms, was contagious, and conversation ebbed and flowed as critiques were exchanged.

Generally the feeling was "Isn't this SOMETHING?" as people gazed down from the Douglas fir gallery to tapestries and suits of armor below in the hall, or from below, up to friends in the gallery and up further to where the sturdy fir beams fit into a sectioned, octagonal skylight.

"I wouldn't live here for anything — I feel like I'm in a prison," confided a woman, trembling at the medievalness of it all. Flaming torches beckoned the way in, and the romanesque arched way opens into a dramatic entry hall where halberds and shields suggest dungeons below.

The drawbridge and dungeon are just suggested, however. The dark recesses below belong to the boat house, and the "moat" is simply the surrounding lake.

The jabber of a pet parrot might sound like a child; the roars come from daughter Melani's five-year-old caged mountain lion, which she found as a cub.

Private living quarters were not open for touring, so the most "secret" entrance we found was the elevator shaft. Tapestries and rugs are the closest thing to plush velvets.

"Stew" Kett, an engineer whose diverse enterprises have included berry farming and building contracting with his son Brandon, chuckled at the layers of reaction to his family's "refuge."

He and Mrs. Kett, who wore an intriguing monarch butterfly blouse and black velvet skirt, answered strings of questions.

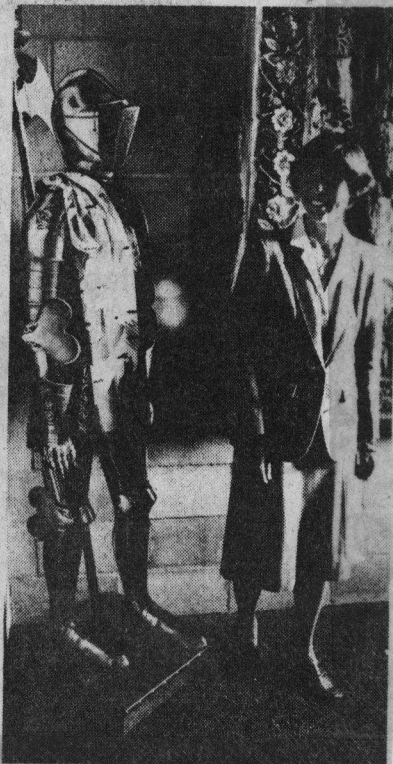
They loved the Scottish castles, and had stayed in a few castle-homes in Scotland, explained Mrs. Kett, who is from the Martinelli family. So they decided to build their own castle on their end of the Interlaken waters. The cinder-block stone came from Petaluma, and each archway, each decorated column, each piece of the medieval-style fireplaces was precision cut only after intensive research, said Kett, giving as much credit to the carpenter crew as to the stone masons. The blocks were poured solid, probably adding to the fine insulating qualities of the castle. Although large windows that look out over the lake cool it somewhat, their electric heating bills have been lower than anticipated because the sun heats the walls as it makes its daily rounds, and the walls hold the heat in. The wiring and plumbing inside the walls was an engineering feat itself. The castle took two years to complete.

Books and historical objets d'art fill the cozy library where windowseats overlook lakeside grasses and sailboats in the distance. One book collection dwells on the Middle Ages, with titles such as "Life in a Medieval

Castle" by Gies, "Master Builders of the Middle Ages," "Romanesque Architecture," "Metal Crafts and Architecture," "Heraldic Design" and genealogical tracings of the Kett family line.

The old blends with the new, in technology and decor. Kett laughs about the medieval weapons, including a cross bow, on one wall — he found them in Toledo, Spain, where they had been props for a movie.

Wines for the day came from local wineries, explained Betty Lewis, president of the historical association and chairwoman for the party. Fancy cheeses and crackers were provided by a committee headed by Ethlyn Miller. Bev Bontadelli organized the wine tasting; Gerry Martin organized the chain of hostesses; and Jean Chicourrat, with help from Jean Herr of Potlatch, added floral arrangements for the party.



Kim Beckett . . . and friend?



Hostess Gerry Martin welcomed Betty Rosewall inside the Kett castle-home, while (above center) owner Stewart Kett and daughter Melani stepped out

the "back door" for a break during the historical association's wine tasting party.

Photos by Sam Vestal