



Lyndhurst Mansion

ACNA Member tour, car show, and box lunch

Overlooking the Hudson River in Tarrytown, New York, is Lyndhurst, one of America's finest Gothic Revival mansions. The architectural brilliance of the residence, designed in 1838 by Alexander Jackson Davis, is complemented by the park-like landscape of the 67-acre estate and a comprehensive collection of original decorative arts. Its noteworthy occupants included: former New York City mayor William Paulding, merchant George Merritt and railroad tycoon Jay Gould.

William Paulding

The estate was shaped during more than a century by these three families. Their influence is evident in the expansion of the main house from a country villa "in the pointed style" to a Gothic mansion; in the rich furnishings; and in the park-like design of the grounds.

The 19th century was a period of political and technological change in America. Romanticism dominated the arts, and as the movement emphasized the appreciation of nature, imagination

and emotion, the Hudson River Valley became the center of painting and architecture. Wealthy patrons commissioned the construction of mansions in a variety of styles along the bluffs of the river from New York City to Albany.

Lyndhurst was first conceived in the minds of architect A.J. Davis and William Paulding who constructed the country villa in 1838 and called it "Knoll". The romantic Gothic Revival design immediately drew attention to the building, critics called it "Paulding's Folly" because its fanciful turrets and asymmetrical outline were unlike most homes constructed in the post-colonial era.

George Merritt

But fascination with the property continued for decades and, as ideas of wealth and status changed with the growing nation, so did the estate, reflecting the tastes and interests of wealthy New York. In 1864-1865, Davis doubled the size of the mansion for the second owner New York merchant George Merritt, who renamed it "Lyndhurst" after the Linden trees that were planted on the estate.

Jay Gould

Railroad magnate Jay Gould purchased the estate as a summer home in 1880, seven years after Merritt died. By 1884 Jay Gould was at the zenith of his power, having gained control of Western Union Telegraph, the New York Elevated Railway and the Union Pacific Railroad. Mr. Gould used Lyndhurst as an escape from the pressures of his business life and

when his health was impaired by tuberculosis; Lyndhurst served as a country retreat until his death in 1892.

Jay Gould's daughter, Helen, who later married Finley J. Shepard, was given charge of the property upon her father's death. She was involved in numerous philanthropic works during her lifetime. After her death in 1938, her sister, Anna, Duchess of Talleyrand-Perigord, returned from France and maintained Lyndhurst until her death in 1961 when the 67-acre estate passed to the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

The grounds at Lyndhurst survive as an outstanding example of 19th century landscape design. Elements include sweeping lawns accented with shrubs and specimen trees, the curving entrance drive revealing "surprise" views, the angular repetition of the Gothic roofline in the evergreens, and the nation's first steel-framed conservatory. The rose garden and fernery are later additions.

ACNA members will tour the Observatory of the Tower with spectacular views of the lower Hudson Valley and Manhattan and the area where servants were housed, the Butler's suite, Butler's Pantry, Root Cellar, Scullery, Kitchen, Ice Closet and Servants' Dining Room.

<http://www.lyndhurst.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/lyndhurst-HD-2.mp4>