

The Castle on Edgewood Terrace

CONTRIBUTED BY MIKE FARRELLY, MONTCLAIR TOWNSHIP HISTORIAN, PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREW WANDER



ONE OF MONTCLAIR'S hidden treasures, there is a castle nestled in the triangle created by Edgewood Terrace, Edgewood Road, and Highland Ave. This is the spot that Yogi Berra famously referred to as "When you come to a fork in the road, take it!" Edgewood Road and Edgewood Terrace meet at Upper Mountain Ave. Both lead to Highland Ave. where Yogi lived.

Construction on the house started in 1908. It was designed by local architect, Frank E. Wallis, to evoke the image of an Elizabethan Tudor castle. A blurb in the August 29th *Montclair Times* of that year said that it would be constructed of Germantown stone with terra cotta trim outside and oak inside. The estimated cost was \$150,000. Although the blurb claimed that it would be finished by the Spring of 1909, the new owners did not take occupancy until Fall. The original owners were Ellis and Adalaide (Prince) Earle. Ellis started his career working for his father-in-law's metallic paint company. He moved into the

precious metal business. He was a founder of the Nipissing Mining Co. of Canada, one of the world's largest producers of silver. He became president. He was an executive, and/or director of several other businesses, including banks, insurance companies and Philips Petroleum. One of his greatest achievements was being a financier of the Empire State Building along with former governor, Alfred E. Smith, Pierre DuPont and several other real estate giants. His front windows commanded a fantastic view of the skyscraper that was once the tallest building in the world. Ellis was appointed head of the NJ Commission for Institutions and Agencies (broken up into the Dept. of Human Services and Dept. of Corrections in 1977). In 1912, NJ Governor Wilson appointed Adalaide to

the Commission for the Blind. Ellis died in 1942.

By 1946 Joseph and Julia Aiello owned the house. Joseph was born in Italy. He came to Montclair in 1909. He and his brothers started a fruit and vegetable store at the NW corner of Bloomfield Ave. and Park St. Joseph was disappointed by the selection of meats available to Montclair shoppers. He secured some choice cuts from a manager of Swift Meat Packing. When word got out, Aiello Brothers became one of the best-known food suppliers in the state. They had a branch in Lake Hopatcong. Gennaro Aiello, opened up a branch in Newark. They built or bought properties to house their operations. Joseph and his brother, Gabriel, became real estate moguls. They bought the Schering Building across Park St. at Bloomfield Ave. (the NE corner). They bought the building that became the Hampton House at the corner of Bloomfield Ave and Fullerton. They built a large building on the west side of South Park St.

The post office occupied part of that building until 1928. A restaurant also opened up in the building. When their business started failing, the owners sold the restaurant to Joseph. He created the Wedgewood Cafeteria, one of Montclair's favorite eateries in times gone by; also the Wedgewood Bakery. His brother, Gabriel, opened up a café a few doors down, called Gabe's Galley. In 1933, at the end of Prohibition, the brothers bought Montclair liquor license #1. Their main store became a liquor supplier, wholesale and retail. Joseph went on to purchase the Knoll Club in Parsippany and build the club house. The real estate partnership was dissolved in 1954 in order to let Joseph and Gabriel's children have a shot at running the various businesses and properties.

Probably the most interesting person to live in the castle was Bob Gaudio, keyboard player and singer for the rock group, the

Four Seasons. He composed most of their hits. He wrote for or produced hits for Neil Diamond, Barry Manilow, Michael Jackson, Diana Ross and Roberta Flack. He was on the road often while he lived here and it is obvious that he didn't spend too much time here. He referred to it in several later interviews. He always called it a "replica English castle", but gave a different number of rooms every time he mentioned it. The 1971 Directory notes that "Antonio" Gaudio, a professional singer, was the occupant. It is possible that it was a typo. Possibly, he was trying to hide his identity. He was married at the time, to Britt Olsen, the directory doesn't list her. In a 2002 Goldmine Magazine interview, he told Ken Sharp, the interviewer, that he and Jake Homes composed the songs for the Four Season's album *Genuine Imitation Life Gazette* and for a Frank Sinatra album called *Watertown* on the third floor. Frank Sinatra visited while Gaudio lived in the house. In 1969 and the very early 1970s, when Gaudio lived in Montclair, The Four Seasons and Sinatra were trying to make their music more socially relevant. Both albums were commercial failures. Some critics loved them and current audiences are starting to rediscover them, but the fans at the time were just not ready for them. The cover of *Genuine Imitation Life Gazette* was designed to appear like a newspaper, filled with fake articles. On the pretend front page is an article about hundreds of teenage girls storming the "Gaudio Castle" in Montclair. Gaudio moved to California in 1972. He now lives in Nashville. ■

*If you'd like to see more images of Montclair homes, they are featured in the book, *Stately Homes of Montclair*, which can be found at Montclair Booksellers, several local libraries and the *Stately Homes of Montclair Facebook page*.*

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