

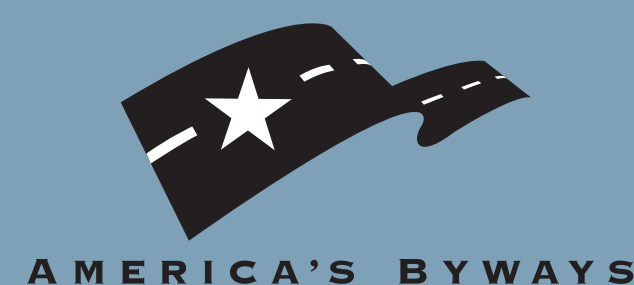
Washington Heritage Trail

The Washington Heritage Trail in West Virginia



The Washington Heritage Trail is a 136-mile national scenic byway inspired by the prominent footsteps of George Washington through the three historic counties of West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle. Compelling history, spectacular scenery, geologic wonders, recreation and year 'round activities and festivals are highlighted by 45 historical sites. The trail meanders across mountains and rivers, through forests, farms and orchards as it connects five 18th century towns that remain the center of life today and offer comfortable lodging, unique shopping and fine dining. More information on attractions and services throughout the area is available at each town's Visitor Center.

www.washingtonheritagetrail.com



A Castle Built for Love

In 1885, noted Maryland businessman, Colonel Samuel Taylor Suit began construction on the elaborate summer cottage now known as Berkeley Castle. The land was part of the original Fruit Hill Farm owned before the Civil War by John Strother of the Berkeley Springs Hotel.

Made of local sandstone, the structure with its stone parapets and three-story turret reportedly gave the townspeople *the impression of a handsome castle nestled among the rocks and cliffs of the mountain*. It was one of more than two dozen splendid structures in the chic "cottage" community of Berkeley Springs during this Victorian Golden Age.

Suit had married Rosa Pelham, daughter of an Alabama Congressman and 30 years his junior two years before starting the castle for her. In August 1887, he and Rosa took up residence with their three young children. A year later Suit was dead after a brief illness.



Rosa Pelham Suit

Rosa spent the next decade hosting elaborate parties making good use of the castle's great hall with matching fireplaces, majestic stairway and lush wood-paneled formal dining room. In 1893, she built a tower-shaped carriage house connected to the main structure by winding tunnels blasted through the rough, natural rock of the mountainside. When WV9 was built in the 1920s, cutting the tower off from the main structure, the tunnel under the road collapsed.

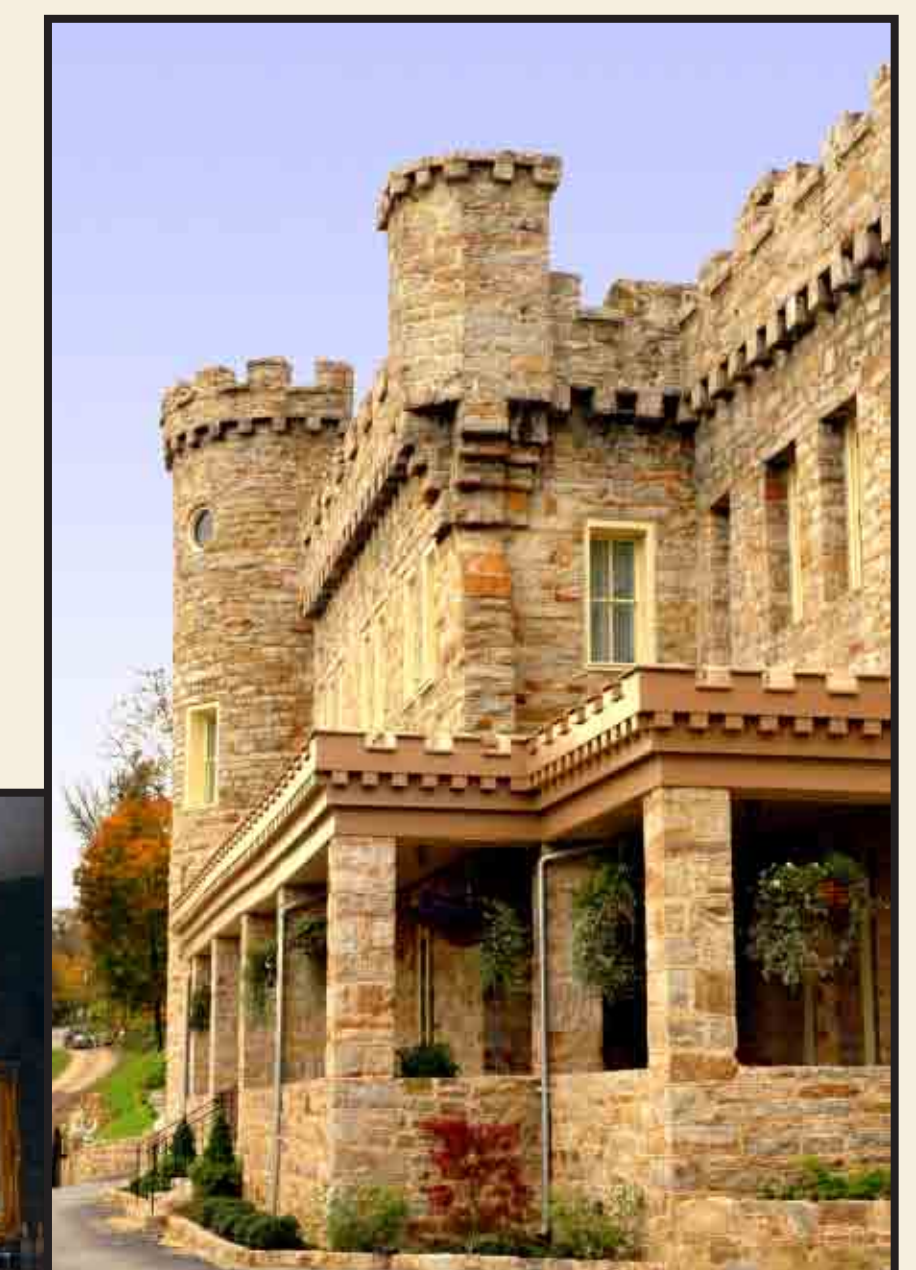
After Rosa vacated her castle, it went through decades of haphazard uses from tea room and artist retreat to site of the Monte Vista Boys Camp. Berkeley Castle became a prime tourism attraction for nearly half a century when Walter Bird purchased it in 1954 and began conducting house tours and spinning tall tales about its history. Eventually it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Unsubstantiated rumors that the castle is haunted persist.



Dining Room

Another baseless legend is that Berkeley Castle is a half scale replica of the famed castle of that name near Bath, England. Thanks to the Internet, it is easy to see that the local Berkeley Castle is about 1/10th the size of the one in England and is more a design by someone who may have seen a castle in a book once rather than a replica of anything.

Calculating the numbers, there are currently eight fireplaces, 16 rooms, nine full bathrooms and three halves as well as a kitchen on every floor. Today, Berkeley Castle is a private home, open to the public for weddings and special community events.



Castle Great Hall

