

Chateau Hathorn

Total Access with Sandra Zueger

It all began with a walk up a hill.

That's when Dolph and Helene Zueger got their first glimpse of the run-down Warwick landmark.

Standing with their three kids in the orchard, suddenly apple picking was the furthest thing from their minds. Instead, gazing down at the 1832 home of Revolutionary War Gen. John Hathorn, Dolph saw a restaurant. So the couple headed down the hill to get a look. Peering through broken windows, they decided to find the owners and buy it.

This would be no flight of fancy. Dolph was a skilled chef. Hailing from Benken, Switzerland, he grew up in the family restaurant. After graduating from culinary school, he came to America in 1969, and worked in Manhattan. During a return trip to Benken to help the family, he met Helene, who hails from Lachen. They married and returned to the States in 1975, living in New Jersey while Dolph continued working in New York. Two years later, the couple bought the Swiss Cabin in Dobbs Ferry and ran it for seven years.

Then came that fateful trip for apples. Fourteen months later, the grand restaurant, fully restored, was open for business, taking its place as the next generation of Zueger restaurants. ❖

Sandra, Dolph and Helene Zueger



Stories by Karen Harris
Photos by Chris Ramirez

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The tasting table is a solid piece of Vermont yellow pine that Dolph brought back sticking out of the tailgate of his Land Cruiser. Two pieces of the trunk serve as legs.

Some stools are beer barrels, others are pieces of tree trunk.

The wine cellar was hand-dug by Dolph from the crawlspace under the ballroom. It took him about a year, since he was also working full-time as chef.

Wine Cellar



Some stones in the walls were dug up from the floor during excavation. Since the room has to be climate controlled for the wines, stones were used to plug holes and make it airtight.

Higher-end wines are shipped in wooden boxes, so Dolph designed the shelves to hold them. That way, bottles are protected, the name is prominent and staff don't have to waste time stocking bottles one by one.

The most expensive vintage on the wine list is the '82 Chateau Mouton Rothschild French bordeaux at \$1,110 a bottle.

The oldest is the 1980 Chateau Mouton Rothschild at \$290 a bottle.

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Fun Facts



The family also keeps some of their own collection downstairs in the wine cellar. For instance, Dolph's prized Nebuchadnezzar of '84 Fieldstone cabernet sauvignon has a large spot on a bottom shelf. The bottle, 15 liters (almost five gallons), with a raised label, was handmade by the California vineyard for Dolph because he loves the wine so much. It was then carefully shipped to Warwick. Helene says yes, someday on some special occasion, they will open it.



The chateau is actually the general's guest house. His living quarters are on the property, but completely run down.

- The Zuegers overhauled the plumbing and electrical, bringing it up to code. But they kept and restored the mahogany, oak and rosewood window casings, doors and fireplaces. While first looking at the house, they mistook the construction of the fireplace in the main dining room as cast iron. Once cleaned, they discovered it was solid copper. The dining room chairs also belong to the house. Helene cleaned and reupholstered them.
- Two conversation starters hanging from the main hall ceiling hail from the couple's homeland. They are authentic cow bells. The bigger one weighs about 45 pounds and was a gift from Dolph's brother, who hand-carried it on the plane to America. In Switzerland, the large bell would be worn by the lead cow. The other smaller bell is typical of one the rest of the herd wears.
- The chateau is a popular wedding spot. The bridal suite, which was the original guest house's master bedroom, still has the servants' call buttons on the wall. No, they don't work.
- Brides love the all-inclusiveness of the grounds. They can get dressed upstairs in the bridal suite, get married in the gazebo alongside the pond and stream out back and then have their cocktail hour on the stone patio. Afterward, guests return to the chateau for the sit-down reception dinner.
- Dolph did all of the exterior stonework and landscaping. He even designed the wrought-iron railing on the bridge leading from the terrace to the gazebo.

Karen Harris, a former writer and editor at the Times Herald-Record, has a modest wine collection, but can now die happy that she's seen the Chateau's complete Opus One collection.