



Castle Gwynn

The creation of Castle Gwynn has been a lifelong dream come to fruition. The vision began in 1970 in a Metro Nashville high school drafting, architecture vocational class when a senior at Glencliff High School sketched his dream house. Glencliff High School educators, the late Mr. Lynn Alexander and Mr. Louis Cothran, discovered Mike Freeman's creative plans for a medieval castle complete with a great room. These drawings were unlike any plans they have seen from their other students. Encouragement from Mike's teachers, parents and family began his lifelong journey to design Castle Gwynn. In 1976 his former teacher Mr. Louis Cothran introduced Mike to a longtime resident and historian of Williamson County, Tennessee, Mr. John Weakley Covington. Mr. Covington had one of his many properties in mind that he felt would be a perfect fit for a hilltop Castle. Mr. Covington made it possible for a young Freeman to purchase this forty-acre hill-top tract of land in Williamson County off state highway 96.

On one of Mike's trips abroad, he visited a twelfth century border Castle in Wales, Castell Coche, or "Red Castle." It became the prototype of Castle Gwynn, appropriately christened "White Castle." Many such fortifications were whitewashed during the Middle Ages so to appear as one massive piece of stone and to prevent invasion in the dark of the night. For example, The Tower of London is known as the "White Tower."

Talented craftsmen and artisans have brought the Castle vision to reality. Master mason, the late Kenneth Canady, and his sons Tony and Tim, teaming with W.L. Maxwell, provided Mike the perfect combination of expertise and imagination. Putting their experience into action, the first tower was begun in 1980. The first-floor kitchen, which required two years of work to mold the 14,000 bricks into sixty brick arches. The late David Wright, tile artisan, highlighted the feat with his reproduction of Mike's Castle Coat of Arms in hand-made tiles, which completed the first floor. Finer points of the plans began to take shape when Mike married Jackie Harmon in 1988, the first wedding conducted at Castle Gwynn. As pictured in the heraldic arms, Castle Gwynn will be completed with a Great Hall, as historically accurate as possible, yet adapted to today's living.

The second tower began in 1985, and interior work began. One of the focal points of Castle Gwynn is the Great Room on the second floor. Under a 28' brick vaulted ceiling, a balcony with a minstrel gallery leads into the area. One showcase of the second tower is the great hooded fireplace. First sketched in 1970, it is now an architect's study in cut Indiana limestone designed by the late Bob Bodkins.

Spencer Turrentine constructed the two massive timber framed roofs, and Coppersmith, Leroy Shumake covered these roofs with beautiful copper in 2004. Large cranes lifted and put the copper roofs in place. Connecting the two towers are brick, stone, and stucco sections constructed by the Canady Family. This middle section has multiple floors. The interior detailed wood working designs were created by

woodworker Raymond (Jeff) Bouley. The late Donnie Stover of Stover and Sons resurfaced the Castle exterior with stucco. Joe Brown, metal work designs created the Castle doors. The late George Parrish and Jim Hackett brightened the Castle windows with lead- stained glass designs. The late Frances Paris completed electrical requirements taking special care to conceal modern conveniences to maintain historical accuracy. Randy Fann provided the upgraded heat and air for Castle Gwynn. Perry and Clay Lawrence worked to update plumbing.

The Great Hall offers the Tennessee Renaissance Festival patrons a glimpse of the Grand structure and unique architecture. Outdoor viewing areas hold some collection pieces of the Rose-Dan Freeman Collection of Armor and Swords and select tapestry creations donated to the Freemans by a dear departed friend, Imogen Stone. The passage of time has brought many changes to this area, and the construction of I-840 forced the Tennessee Renaissance Festival in 1997 to relocate to an adjoining site across New Castle Road. A timber-framed covered bridge greets festival- goers, inviting them to the hillside festival grounds. The Renaissance village of Covington Glen showcase is a hammerbeam structure, following a roof style typical of great medieval halls throughout Britain and Europe.

Several years of planning and hard work by Williamson County Mayor Rogers Anderson along with Gordon Hampton, Director of Williamson County Parks and Recreation, and Mike and Jackie Freeman guaranteed the continuation of the Tennessee Renaissance Festival. In 2022, Williamson County purchased the Festival property on New Castle Road for a park, and the Freemans gifted their 35-year business of the Tennessee Renaissance Festival to Williamson County. The Freemans are appreciative that Williamson County Parks and Recreation is now the steward of the Tennessee Renaissance Festival and that future generations will continue to enjoy this “Tennessee Treasure.”

The Freemans are the residents of Castle Gwynn along with their Scottish Deerhounds, and they have put forth countless hours and effort to keep the grounds safe and comfortable for your festival visit. Consultant Carl Renegar coordinates the outside Castle Gwynn visit during Festival days. The Freemans respectfully request that you follow all signage and instructions given by Castle Gwynn staff to protect this residence, its grounds, and Castle Gwynn’s environment. The Freemans welcome you to the exterior grounds of Castle Gwynn, and hope you enjoy going back to the days of King Arthur- “Don’t let it be forgot...that there was once a spot for one brief shining moment that was known as Camelot.”