

REAL ESTATE

David Rockefeller's Westchester Estate Lists for \$22 Million

Exclusive

By STEFANOS CHEN SEPT. 8, 2017

In New York City, David Rockefeller led Chase Manhattan bank and brokered deals that shaped the city skyline.

In Pocantico Hills, a Westchester hamlet in the town of Mount Pleasant, he raised a donkey named Cleopatra and collected giant beetles from around the world.

Glimpses of that private life are on display at Hudson Pines, Mr. Rockefeller's pastoral 75-acre manor in Westchester, where his estate is expected to list the property for \$22 million with Houlihan Lawrence. The property taxes are \$240,405 a year.

Mr. Rockefeller, the last surviving grandson of the oil tycoon John D. Rockefeller, died in March, at the age of 101, in his bedroom on the premises. The former chief executive and chairman of Chase Manhattan, Mr. Rockefeller was also instrumental in the building of the World Trade Center, of which one of the Twin Towers was nicknamed "David" in his honor. In June, his estate listed his Manhattan mansion on East 65th Street for \$32.5 million.

The main residence on the estate is a more than 11,000-square-foot, Georgian-style mansion completed in 1938. The architect, Mott Schmidt, was a favorite among the New York elite, including the Vanderbilts and Astors, according to Mark A. Hewitt, the author of “The Architecture of Mott B. Schmidt.”

“It’s very understated,” despite its size, said Mr. Hewitt, who said the style was a reaction to the gaudy predilections of the robber barons of previous years. The two-story manor, built from the bricks of a demolished New York townhouse — long before upcycling was trendy — is flanked by a towering oak and an American Elm tree. Apple orchards dot the grounds. The house has 11 bedrooms, 12 full bathrooms and three half baths.

The dimensions of the rooms are grand, with tall ceilings and banks of windows overlooking the Hudson River and broad lawns. There are seven wood-burning fireplaces, an elevator, a large catering kitchen and butler’s pantry with a built-in vault safe for silverware.

On a recent visit, most of Mr. Rockefeller’s prized possessions had been removed — paintings by the likes of Picasso, Renoir and Monet; a cache of prized porcelain figurines; stacks of fine china. Many of the collections are slated to auction at Christie’s, with proceeds benefiting charities.

But callbacks to his hobbies persist. The family’s Simmental cattle, a Swiss breed prized for its dairy and meat, still roam the surrounding hills. His wife, Peggy, who died in 1996, studied animal husbandry in her 60s and was a passionate breeder, said Eileen R. Growald, Mr. Rockefeller’s youngest daughter.

“This was like a dream home, where we had every kind of animal,” said Mrs. Growald, 65, an author and poet. In her childhood, the family kept six horses (one for each of the children), a herd of sheep, pet raccoons, deer, four dogs, two cats and a donkey.

The pet cemetery, a tree-shaded mound behind the residence, with three headstones, pays tribute to the family’s Norwegian Elkhounds — Dandy (1974-1986), Trygvie (1986-1996) and Tory (1996-2011).

Mrs. Growald said she and her siblings are selling the property because they have no plans to live there, especially now that so many of their memories have been shipped away. “I just can’t imagine going back now,” she said.

There are 12 structures on the property, including stables, cattle barns, greenhouses, staff quarters and a carriage house, where Mr. Rockefeller collected antique horse carriages.

One collection that remains on the premises is locked away in the mansion basement, where Mr. Rockefeller amassed some 250,000 beetle specimens, including 10,000 different species.

“He was not a dabbler — he was a very good entomologist,” said Geoffrey Morse, a professor at the University of San Diego, who has worked to organize the collection for years. The earliest specimen dates to 1924, from Seal Harbor in Maine, when Mr. Rockefeller was eight years old; the latest entry, an acquisition from Jamaica, was added last year. Some prized specimens include the giant West African Goliathus beetle.

The collection will eventually move to the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard University, where they will fill about 20 museum cabinets.

Anthony Cutugno, senior vice president of Houlihan Lawrence Private Brokerage, and David Turner, an associate broker with the firm, have the listing.

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