



History of *Concerts at Castle Hill* Concert Series

Castle Hill on the Crane Estate has a long history of outdoor entertainment, even before it was bequeathed to The Trustees in 1949 by Mrs. Richard T. Crane, Jr., wife of the late Richard T. Crane, Jr. (son of Chicago industrialist and plumbing magnate Richard T. Crane). The Crane family hosted entertainers at the Casino Complex, a pool and entertainment space located on the Grand Allée.



Shortly after The Trustees began managing the property, an Art Center was launched and featured a series of concerts. The Castle Hill Foundation was formed and soon took over the management of these programs, offering a wider variety of entertainment, including classical music concerts, operas, ballets and theatre performances that ran for the next 20 years, from 1951 through 1973. These events were a source of important revenue generation to help with the ongoing preservation and care of the Great House at Castle Hill and were run primarily by a generous, dedicated group of volunteers.

In 1955, the Castle Hill Foundation offered the first jazz concert featuring Louis Armstrong. As jazz grew in popularity, jazz concerts took over the majority of the performance lineup and flourished at the property through the late 1960s. According to our archives, jazz legends such as Count Basie, Ella Fitzgerald, Duke Ellington, George Shearing, Erroll Garner, Teddy Wilson, Nina Simone, Maynard Ferguson, and Dave Brubeck all performed there. After 1969, the Castle Hill Concerts grew more diverse.

In 1973, The Trustees began offering Festivals at Castle Hill. A small professional staff was engaged and the mission of the Festival was to become a center for educational and cultural activities, in keeping with the legacy of the property, which it accomplished. The Festival featured a wide variety of internationally recognized programs and entertainers from the 16th to 20th centuries, including historic dance instruction, chamber music, and children's programs. Some popular artists included Paul Winter, and folk singers Emmylou Harris, Judy Collins, Shawn Colvin, and Arlo Guthrie. In 1987, The Castle Hill Foundation ceased to exist as a single entity when it merged with The Trustees and its programs were absorbed by The Trustees. Festival style programs continued for a number of years through 1995.

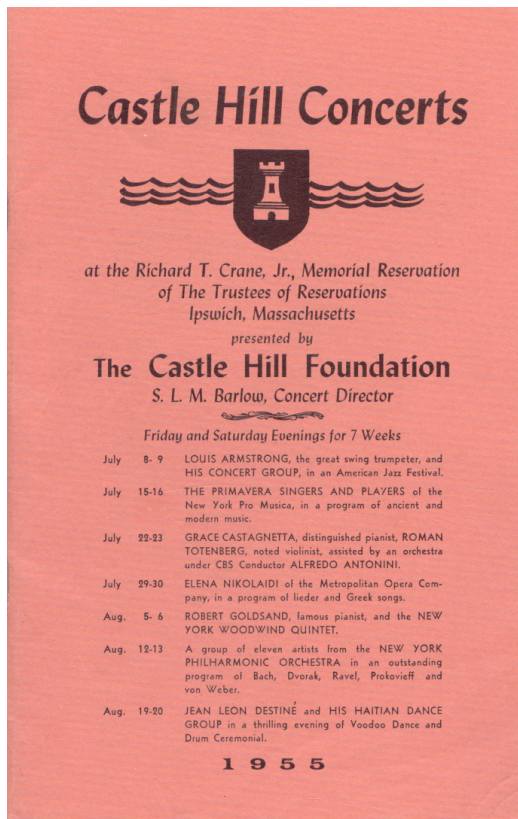
More about the Castle Hill Foundation

From 1951 to 1954, the Castle Hill Foundation presented its concerts under the guidance of Concert Director S.L.M. Barlow. Demand for concerts grew and by 1954 there were concerts Friday and Saturday evenings for seven weeks, featuring mostly classical music. David C. Crockett served as the vice president and president of the Castle Hill Foundation for many years from 1954 to 1978, with a brief break around 1965 to 1969 when the New England Conservatory of Music started an 8-week summer school at the estate. The idea was similar to what the Boston Symphony Orchestra had been doing at Tanglewood for 25 years. This venture proved too costly for the Conservatory and was closed in 1969, so Crockett came back to Castle Hill to be the

director/producer of the summer concerts. He had help from others, like George Wein of Newport Jazz and Folk Festival fame, who helped organize the bands for the summer jazz series.

More about the Castle Hill Picnic Concert Series

In 1996, as the Trustees looked to increase public engagement at the property and carry on the successful



legacy of the concert series, the organization began offering the Summer Picnic Concert Series that exists today: one of many popular, family-friendly activities offered on the property designed to attract diverse audiences, including Massachusetts residents and visitors of all ages. The program has been flourishing ever since, averaging between 1,000-2,000 attendees per concert.

History of jazz concerts at Castle Hill

Before 1955, the Castle Hill Concert Series was not known for its jazz music. However, with the growing popularity of jazz, the Castle Hill Foundation decided to begin the summer season that year with the first-ever American Jazz Festival to support the “development and flowering of this indigenous and important form of American music.” On July 8th and 9th of that year, Louis Armstrong performed at Castle Hill, marking the beginning of jazz musicians at the summer series. His concert was widely popular and drew 5,000 people. After Armstrong’s successful appearance, numerous other notable jazz musicians graced the Ipswich venue, such as Count Basie (1956), Ella Fitzgerald (1957), Duke Ellington (1958), and George Shearing and Dave Brubeck (1959). In 1960 and 1961, George Wein, founder and producer of both the Newport Jazz and Folk Festivals, helped

organize the bands for the summer series. In 1969, Nina Simone, at the height of her career, played with Gary Burton and his Quartet as well as the Newport All-Stars. Wein’s concerts drew an average of 6,000-7,000 people.



Trustees concerts today

After 1969, the Castle Hill Concerts grew more and more diverse, featuring folk and other popular genres. Today, our Castle Hill summer picnic concerts are considered one of the signature event series held at Castle Hill each year, and one of our most popular ongoing programs at the property. They offer a mix of popular genres such as Americana, Rock, Latin, and Swing that appeal to a wide variety of audiences and age groups. Locals and visitors from near and far come to hear the concerts. Some of them stay at our Inn at Castle Hill down the hill from the Great House and make a longer lasting adventure out of the experience. While there, concertgoers learn more about the program offerings we hold at this important cultural landscape. Many come back for interior and exterior house tours, other events and programs and to visit our world-famous, family friendly Crane Beach and Wildlife Refuge. They are a wonderful way of engaging people in the legacy of this iconic property, as well as in The Trustees important preservation and conservation mission.