Romantic island life grows more popular

By RICHARD D. LYONS
New York Times News Service

CANARY ISLAND, N.Y. — "This is heaven," Robert Langley said with a sigh as he sat in the glass-enclosed veranda of his new stone-and-wood vacation home on the St. Lawrence River. "I've always wanted to own an island."

Langley, his wife, Lizbeth, and their five children are from Binghamton, N.Y. But they travel extensively and have lived abroad for long periods, and they say it is here that they have finally found the solitude they have been seeking. An increasing number of other affluent people appear to be seeking it as well, for in the last several years there has been a sharp increase in the demand for privately owned islands.

Real-estate companies specializing in islands have sprung up in Manhattan, Miami and elsewhere. A new magazine called Islands is to start publication in California next month, and a series of events in this area of the Canadian border has apparently whetted appetites for ownership of one of the Thousand Islands, situated north of Watertown, N.Y.

One reason was expressed by William Levy, a 64-year-old corporation president from Wilmington, Del., who bought St. Elmo Island, two miles southwest of here, last month.

"I feel a lot more secure here," he said, explaining that he had enjoyed the outdoors for many years at a summer home in Ontario to the north. "I became disturbed by the increasing nationalistic feeling there, and I simply feel better being here."

To achieve his heightened sense of security, he paid $150,000 for the island and its three-bedroom, two-bath house. One recent morning six boats were tied up at his dock, with more expected as other lunch guests arrived.

Robert W. Kemp, president of the real-estate company that handled the sale of Canary and St. Elmo Islands, said the "Quebec scare," as the separatist movement is often called here, had helped fuel demand for island property. "There also appears to be an awful lot of money around here that once was in the stock market," he said, "but now is being invested in the sort of real estate the purchaser can enjoy as well as watch appreciate in value."

The asking price for Canary Island, for example, rose more than 40 percent in the last two years, finally selling for more than $100,000.

Some island properties in the river here in Jefferson and St. Lawrence counties have risen dramatically in price in recent years, while others have not budged — including the castle on Jorstad Island, a rose-hued granite building with a five-story bell tower and two huge boathouses, perhaps the biggest, most romantic white elephant on the St. Lawrence.

Frederick G. Bourne, the Singer sewing-machine magnate, bought the island in 1896, then imported 90 Italian stonemasons to fashion a $4 million castle for his wife. Eight years in construction, it has 46 rooms and an indoor squash court, and it comes complete with suits of armor, medieval weapons, 18th-century furniture and a maze of secret passages inside the walls of the vaulted rooms.

The 10-acre island, a sliver of which is in Canada, is owned by Mr. and Mrs. Harold George Martin, who are both ministers and who use it as a retreat for Bible study groups and missionaries. "I'm just hooked on this place," Mrs. Martin said recently over tea in the oak-paneled library.

Yet the Martins, who have spent large sums of money maintaining and restoring the castle, conceded that its upkeep was beginning to overwhelm them. They have put it on the market for $5 million but concede that they would probably take a good deal less.

"The engine of the motorboat conked out the other night and I had to paddle four miles," Martin said. "If someone had asked me to set a price at the time, I would have replied, 'Do you have a shiny dime?' "

Sept. 22, 1981

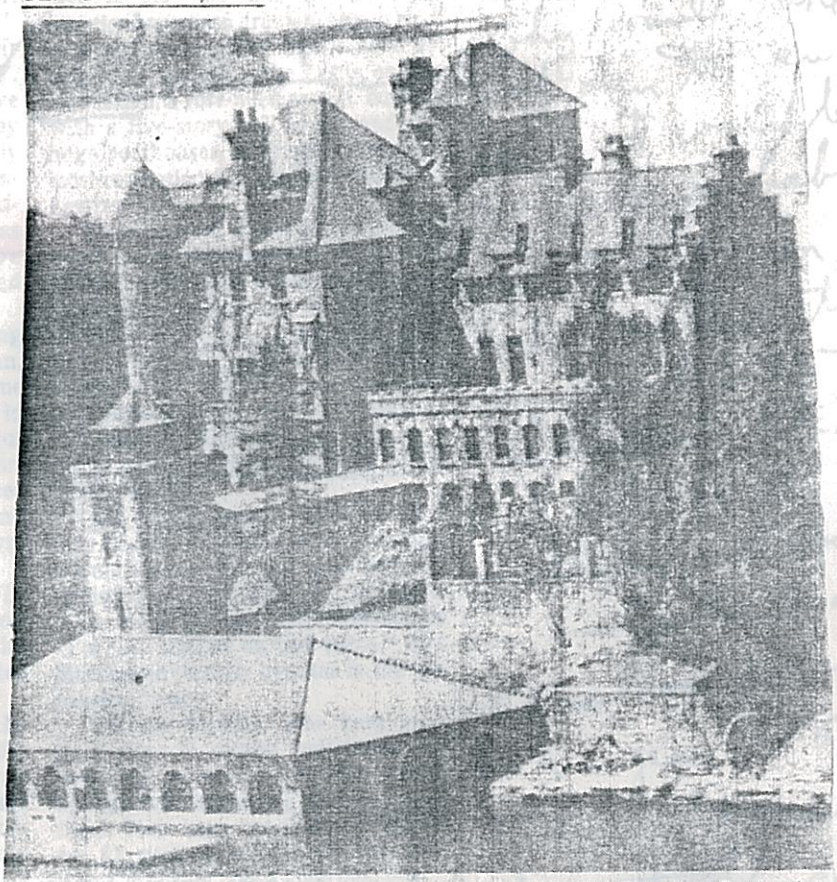
Scientists & Contacts:

This tiny island and "castle" would be perfect for my UFO Base!! To go into the why would take too long to explain to you. But I assure you, it would be perfect. It could probably be bought for 3 million. It would then take 1 million to put necessary equipment into the Castle (electronic, etc.) repair it, and defense it. The last million... $500,000 to pay off an important debt and $500,000 for expenses over a 3-year or 5-year period.

If any of you have a connection somewhere that can bring this about, I urge you to do so quickly! Why? Because the UFO Base, whether this Castle Island or a huge lodge on a mountainside... is the only means of averting "The Last War"... WWIII... according to my UFOs.

Owens

SEPTEMBER 21, 1981



New York Times News Service photo

MAGIC ISLAND — Jorstad Island, on the market for $5 million, offers a 46-room mansion with indoor squash court, a maze of secret passages, and collection of suits of armor, medieval weapons and 18th-century furniture.