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Exclusive

An attention-getter since its appearance in 1853 along the Hudson River, an Italianate villa known as Nuits in the Westchester village of Irvington, once home to John Jacob Astor III, is poised to enter the market with a price tag of \$14.75 million, making it one of the highest priced properties in the Rivertowns. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the house has more than 20 rooms and was last listed in 2012 for \$11.75 million, but remained in the hands of the present owner, Martin W. Dolan, an investment banker.

Also known as the Cottenet-Brown House, the three-level mansion was designed by the German-born architect Detlef Lienau for François Cottenet, a merchant who wanted a bit of his native France in a river villa. To achieve that, Lienau used yellow-hued limestone from Caen, France, that served as ballast aboard ships owned by Cottenet.

The original footprint of the mansion grew in the 1860s, when Cottenet added a wing that included several bedrooms, a billiards room and a conservatory. (Mr. Dolan said a scene in the 1993 film “The Age of Innocence” was filmed in the conservatory.) Over the years, the house passed through the hands of several owners, many with deep ties to the village. One of them, Cyrus

West Field, who was one of the founders of the Atlantic Telegraph Company, did not own it for long, but his short ownership yielded some long-term stipulations: The building can be used only as a residence.

John Jacob Astor III spent the last years of his life there. After his death in 1890, the house was sold to Manhattan College, which sought to ease Field's restriction and use it for educational purposes. When that effort failed, the estate was sold to a local businessman who parceled off much of the mansion's 65 acres for the development of the neighboring Ardsley Park. The mansion now sits on five acres of rolling and landscaped lawns, bordered at the river's edge by tennis courts operated by the Ardsley Country Club.

On a recent tour, Dalia Valdes, of Julia B. Fee Sotheby's International Realty, noted the mansion's distinctive features, including floor-to-ceiling louvered French doors. A long open hallway on the first floor offers a clear view from the front to the rear of the house. Original details include a marble floor in the conservatory and fireplaces with windows atop them, allowing visitors to enjoy the fire and the view at the same time.

The owner, Mr. Dolan, grew up in Irvington in a family of nine children. In 2000, he was living in London with his wife and three young children, in a 1800s South Kensington townhouse that he had renovated, when he saw a newspaper ad for Nuits. He and his wife bought it for \$4.3 million. He estimates he has spent "millions" over the last 15 years restoring and modernizing the home, adding an open kitchen with a great room, six full baths, a multizoned central air-conditioning and heating system, interior and exterior sound systems and an in-ground swimming pool.

Windows have been replaced and woodwork has been restored throughout the mansion. Work is still being done on the exterior and in the lower level, which will include a pool house, two saunas, a game room, a wine cellar and a catering facility. A media room is already outfitted with several rows of oversize leather seats. The house will have 16,800 square feet, Mr. Dolan said, including the lower level when it is completed.

Separated from his wife, and with his children at school or living on their own, Mr. Dolan, 57, has been living for the last few years in a three-bedroom

carriage house on the property and renting out the mansion. (The cottage is included in the asking price.) “The kids are grown up and need their own apartments and it’s a big house for one person,” Mr. Dolan said.

Calling it “not a museum, but a great place to live,” Mr. Dolan said he would let Nuits go for “the right price.”

“I’ll start again on the smallest house in Irvington,” he said. “This is a beautiful, beautiful area.”

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