

REAL-LIFE CASTLES

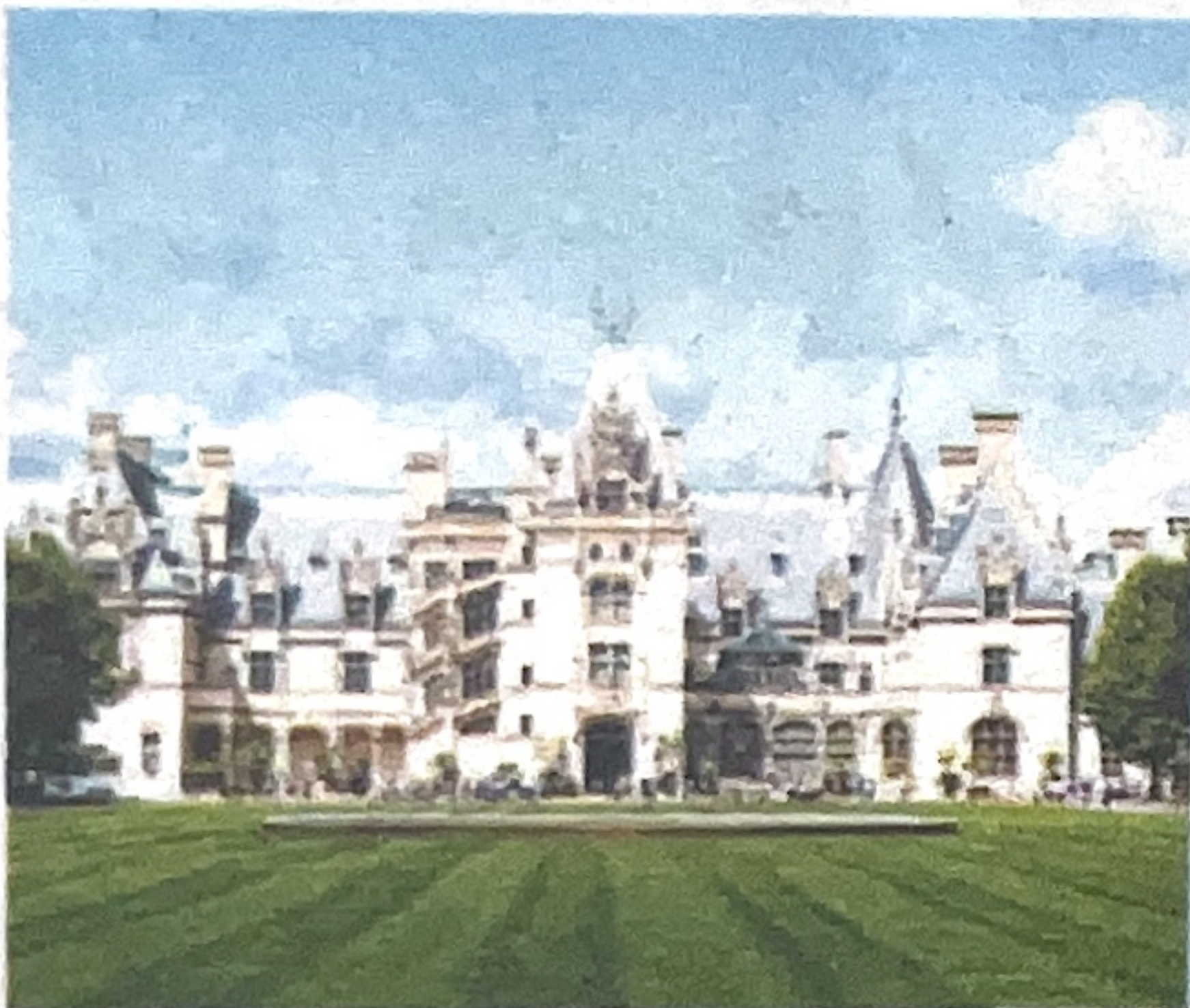
RIGHT HERE IN AMERICA



BY HELEN I. HWANG

YOU MIGHT THINK castles are just the stuff of fairy tales and Disney movies. In reality, there are castles all over Europe with thick stone walls, lookout towers and moats that used to be homes for important families and fortresses against attacks. So why don't we have them here?

By the time the United States was founded, castle-building had gone out of fashion. Also, there was no king or queen here to build a castle for, says Thomas Finan, who teaches castle history at St. Louis University. Luckily, that didn't stop some Americans from building their own — and you can go see them! These four castles, right here in the United States, are open to visitors.



1

BILTMORE ESTATE

ASHEVILLE, N.C.

Biltmore Estate isn't just a castle — it's also the biggest house in the United States, with a whopping 250 rooms. Who even wants a house that big? George Vanderbilt, a member of what was once one of the richest families in America. He built the home in 1889, in the style of a 1500s French castle. (Though most French castles probably didn't have 43 bathrooms!) Today the huge estate, in the Blue Ridge Mountains, has a museum and two hotels. Kids can go on a scavenger hunt through the castle, watch some old-timey blacksmithing and walk through an underground tunnel that used to store manure. How delightful!



2

BELVEDERE CASTLE

NEW YORK CITY

Smack-dab in the middle of Central Park, this stone tower was designed to look like medieval ruins. But it was actually built in the 1800s, mostly just to look cool and give parkgoers a nice lookout onto landmarks like the Turtle Pond. ("Belvedere" means "beautiful view" in Italian.) It is still a great place for that. Anyone can climb up the stone steps for a peek around the park. It also has another purpose: It's the site of Manhattan's only official weather-monitoring station.



3

'IOLANI PALACE

HONOLULU, HAWAII

This is the only American castle that housed royalty. Hawaii didn't become a state until 1959, and until the late 1800s, it was ruled by monarchs. But only three had a chance to live in the ornate palace. In 1893, just a decade after the building's completion, the United States illegally overthrew the monarchy. When Queen Lili'uokalani tried to take back the throne, she was arrested by the new government and imprisoned in a second-floor bedroom for eight months. Visitors can tour that room and learn about that dark chapter of history, which Congress officially apologized for a hundred years later.



4

HEARST CASTLE

SAN SIMEON, CALIF.

Back in 1919, the newspaper owner William Randolph Hearst decided he needed a new house — specifically, a huge, impressive house where he could throw big parties for all his famous friends, like Hollywood stars and powerful politicians. So he hired Julia Morgan, the first American female architect to lead her own firm, to design him one that looked like the European castles he saw as a kid. On a hill overlooking the Pacific Ocean, it includes a giant main house, three guesthouses, a private airstrip and a huge outdoor pool, surrounded by Greco-Roman columns and statues. No wonder it took 29 years to build! ♦

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2025

The New York Times

For Kids

EDITOR'S NOTE: THIS SECTION SHOULD NOT BE READ BY GROWN UPS



THE
WEIRD,
WONDERFUL
SCIENCE
OF
SLEEP

WHY TIKTOK WENT DARK, PAGE 3 ● MEET A
9-YEAR-OLD SUBWAY SPEEDRUNNER,
PAGE 8 ● SPACE IS A JUNKYARD, PAGE 5 ● THE
PRESIDENT'S NEW CREW, PAGE 3 ● HOW TO
FIGHT A WILDFIRE, PAGE 5

ILLUSTRATION BY ORI TOON

"All the News
That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times

THE WEATHER

Heavy, flooding rain will continue in the Northwest. Drenching rain is expected in southeast Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi Coasts. Quiet in Southwest. Weather map, Page 34.

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Prices in Canada may be higher

\$6.00



PRESIDENT OUSTS TOP U.S. GENERAL AS PART OF PURGE

*Trump Attempting to Root Out What He
Sees as Military's Diversity Focus*

This article is by Eric Schmitt, Helene Cooper and Jonathan Swan.

WASHINGTON — President Trump fired the country's senior military officer as part of an extraordinary Friday night purge at the Pentagon that injected politics into the selection of the nation's top military leaders.

Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr., a four-star fighter pilot known as C.Q. who became only the second African American to hold the chairman's job, is to be replaced by a little-known retired three-star Air Force general, Dan Caine, who endeared himself to the president when they met in Iraq six years ago.

In all, six Pentagon officials were fired, including Adm. Lisa Franchetti, the first woman to lead the Navy; Gen. James Slife, the vice chief of the Air Force; and the top lawyers for the Army, Navy and Air Force.

The decision to fire General Brown, which Mr. Trump announced in a message on Truth Social, reflects the president's insistence that the military's leadership is too mired in diversity issues, has lost sight of its role as a combat force to defend the country and is out of step with his "America First" movement.

Joint Chiefs chairmen traditionally remain in place as administrations change, regardless of the president's political party. But current White House and Pentagon officials said they wanted to appoint their own top leaders.

In a statement, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth thanked Admiral Franchetti and General Slife "for their service and dedication

to our country" and requested nominations for their replacements.

Mr. Hegseth did not say why he was firing the judge advocates general. But in his Senate confirmation hearing last month, he criticized military lawyers for placing needless legal restrictions on soldiers in battle — putting "his or her own priorities in front of the war fighters, their promotions, their medals, in front of having the backs of those making the tough calls on the front lines."

Mr. Hegseth has previously



Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr., left, is to be replaced by Dan Caine, a retired Air Force general.

said General Brown should be fired because of his "woke" focus on diversity, equity and inclusion programs in the military.

"First of all, you've got to fire the chairman of the Joint Chiefs," Mr. Hegseth said in an appearance on the "Shawn Ryan Show" in November. He added that any general involved with D.E.I. efforts should be fired. "Either you're in for warfighting, and that's it," he said. "That's the only litmus test we care about."

On Mr. Hegseth's first day at the Pentagon, however, he stood next to General Brown, who became

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RESISTANCE Some civil servants are finding public and private ways to push back against orders issued by Elon Musk's team. PAGE 19

German Vote May Offer Jolt Europe Seeks

By JIM TANKERSLEY
and CHRISTOPHER F. SCHUETZE

In the final days of Germany's abbreviated election campaign, the task facing its next chancellor has snapped into focus. It appears far more existential, for the country and for all of Europe, than almost anyone initially imagined.

Germany's coalition government came apart just a day after the U.S. presidential election last November. As a result, a vote that

A Key to Trump's Success: His Genius for Lying

By PETER BAKER

WASHINGTON — The United States sent \$50 million in condoms to Hamas. Diversity programs caused a plane crash. China controls the Panama Canal. Ukraine

started the war with Russia.

Except, no. None of that is true. Not that it stops President Trump. In the first month since he returned to power, he has demonstrated once again a brazen willingness to advance distortions, conspiracy theories and outright lies to justify major policy decisions.

*Unfettered by Truth, He
Makes His Reality
America's, Too*

to boasting about his record and tearing down his enemies. But what were dubbed "alternative facts" in his first term have quickly become a whole alternative reality in his second to lay the groundwork for radical change as he moves to aggressively reshape America and the world.

If the U.S. Agency for Interna-

a Palestinian terrorist group in Gaza, he claims, then it deserves to be dismantled. If recruiting people other than white men to work in the airline sector compromises safety, such programs should be eliminated. If China controls the strategic passage through the continent, the United States should take it back. If Ukraine is the aggressor, it should make concessions to Moscow.

"One of the biggest presidential powers that Trump has deployed is the ability to shape his own narrative," said Julian E. Zelizer, a Princeton history professor and editor of a book of