

New owners embrace history, future of Bath's Nimrod Hall

BY MARGO OXENDINE • STAFF WRITER – Bath County Recorder



Nimrod Hall, featured here in a rare winter snow shot, has been purchased by artist Laura Loe and her husband, Will Loving. The historic summer resort served as a stagecoach stop as early as 1783, and became a retreat for travelers in the 1880s. (Photo courtesy Laura Loe)

NIMROD HALL – The place has been there so long, it's become the name of the location it occupies.

Since 1783 — seven years before Bath County was founded — Nimrod Hall has maintained its historic presence. It began as a stagecoach stop, and today, it is still catering to travelers. Travelers who want to “get away from it all,” and spend some time unwinding at the bucolic inn beside the winding Cowpasture River. The site opened as a summer resort in the 1880s.

Guests at Nimrod come to fish, to sit on the porch and read, to partake of the sumptuous down-home meals that are included. But lots of them come to write or to paint.

That's how noted artist Laura Loe first discovered Nimrod Hall 20 years ago. In 1994, she came to paint. By 1997, she was leading painting classes there herself.

When Loe and her husband, Will Loving, heard the historic site they and their

family so loved was for sale, they decided to fulfill a dream. They started talking seriously about it June 29, 2013. “That’s the night of the derecho,” Loe laughs. “I’m glad we didn’t take that as a warning!”

Loving and Loe purchased the place from Jim and Frankie Wood Apistolos in September. Frankie had inherited [Nimrod Hall](#) from her grandmother, who bought the rolling 100 acres and its charming structures in 1906.

Here’s how Loe describes the couple’s decision.

“The derecho aside, it was a perfect storm of many things that led to the purchase,” she said from her home in Richmond this week. “We had never planned to take it on, but my husband sold his company about two years ago and suddenly we had the time to think about taking it over. He had the availability to be there more often, and not have the day-to-day needs in Richmond, as he was now working for himself. The Apistolases were at retirement age and with a place like Nimrod, you have to have a flexible job like mine, and then Will’s, to be able to run Nimrod. Since I work from studio to studio, I can simply move my job to Nimrod. I have been buried in making artwork for five or six weeks every summer, and my children grew up there. Will came up every weekend, and the thought that it would not be there was very sad, as well as crimping in my career, as much of the work I do all year long is during the summer at Nimrod. We both love [Nimrod Hall](#) and it made some common sense for us to be the ones to take over, and lots of things fell in place to make it happen.”

To put rumors to rest, she adds, “We have a hugely active life in Richmond though, so although I have heard the rumors myself, we will not be moving to Nimrod full time. I have a 10-, 12- and 14-year-old, so summer will be our time in [Bath County](#).”

[Nimrod Hall](#) opens for the season June 1, and closes this year Aug. 23 – just before Labor Day – to give the family time to regroup and enjoy themselves without guests in residence. “We are also closing July 18-20 to give the staff a break,” Loe notes.

So what if you are not an artist, but simply a person or family who wants to

enjoy all that [Nimrod Hall](#) has to offer. Can you still make reservations?

“Absolutely!” Loe says. “The traditional way [Nimrod Hall](#) has been booked is that people come back, year after year, and stay in the same cottage, so much of the Hall is already booked. But,” she adds, “we have weekends available for the first time, as we changed the booking from Saturday-to-Saturday to Sunday-Friday. This way, we hope to be able to entertain some local people, or the person who just does not have a whole week, but only a weekend. [Bath County](#) is so easy to reach, it is a logical way to offer more chances for people to stay. It is key with Nimrod that booking early is helpful. Another thing is that local artists can take the workshops as day students. We have some folks from [Hot Springs](#) who do that, and it is a great way to enjoy Nimrod Hall.”

It’s obvious that Loe and Loving, who got married at [Nimrod Hall](#), are head over heels about the place.

“I think buying it sums that up,” Loe laughs. “We had lots of real hard thoughts on whether we were up to the task. Nimrod is not a cakewalk. It was built in 1783 and has been a summer resort for most of that time, so a lot about it is unique. I love it because it is the one place that simply inspires me to paint. I have and do travel extensively, yet I can be less inspired by a sunset in the Caribbean than a view of the [Allegheny Mountains](#) on a rainy day. It really does just make no sense, but something at [Nimrod Hall](#) just makes every artist or writer feel more creative and uninhibited. Certainly it does for me. As adults, I think we can lose our sense of being ‘just us.’ Not a mom, not a wife or husband, but just a person, and Nimrod gives that back to the people who come here for the workshops. It is like going back in time to when you were a child; your biggest worry is that moment in time. How can you not love that?”

She adds, “For families it is just as magical. Where can you go where there is not anything to entertain you but the same things that entertained people 100 years ago? It is truly unlike any other family vacation. It’s not for everyone though. We are rustic; the original ‘shabby chic.’ and proud of it!”

She notes, “Even as far back as 1910 there was a great article about a Richmonder who came and left within a day, due to the rustic country setting. Nimrod is perfect for this of us who love it, but we are well aware everyone won’t.

“As far as my family, they have had no choice. Each of them spent their summers here. They are excited we own it, in a way, but mostly, it is ‘just Nimrod,’ and I don’t think they can imagine their lives not being here. It has been their constant.”

In her extensive research about Nimrod, Loe found one constant.

“A thing I have found to be fascinating is I researched Nimrod and found great articles on it in the papers all around the region from when it was owned in the 1880s. The place is very American Downton Abbey. Nimrod, with its tradition of people returning year after year, retains that authenticity of old Virginia. It has been updated, of course, when needed, but there is such an amazing sense of history just walking on the property. Frankie Wood Apistolas and Jimmy Apistolas ran Nimrod while they both had full time jobs, and were raising their family, from the 1980s until the sale; that was not an easy task. Keeping the place going was very important to them, and I think selling it to Will and me was their attempt to have Nimrod continue. It was a smart move, because we are excited about it and hope to inject some new things, while respecting and loving the place. Aside from [Nimrod Hall](#) as a summer resort, it was also a beloved camp from 1937 until 1985. There is so much history; it makes you smile just to think about it continuing.”

To learn more about [Nimrod Hall](#), its rich history, and to make reservations, visit the website www.nimrodhall.com.