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Castle Oron
Some History

On behalf of the Society for the Preservation of the Castle of Oron, I extend a warm welcome to you in these parts.
Oron already appeared on Roman charts as a stage on the road between Italy and Germany. The castle of Oron was built toward the end of the 12th century, at a time when political and military struggles were bringing trouble to the country. The Oron family was able to grow its estate through marriage and inheritance, and around the end of the 14th century the castle took more or less its present appearance. The Oron family had a pretty extensive estate as they owned also vineyards near Lavaux and a third of the town of Vevey. The castle was very lucky as through the centuries it remained safe from war destructions and fire.
In 1388, the Oron family became extinct. However, François I of Oron had married the daughter of the Earl of Gruyères, and this family therefor inherited the Oron barony. The Gruyères had luxury tastes which their income could not afford. In the middle of the 16th century they were ruined and had to sell their estate. The Fribourg and Bern Cantons shared among themselves the remnants of the Gruyères earldom. The castle of Oron and its lands were purchased in 1555 and converted into a bailiwick. 43 bailiffs succeeded one another inside these walls.
As of 1536, the Bern Canton occupied the Vaud region and divided it into bailiwicks, districts that were governed by bailiffs who moved every 6 years. These bailiffs were often retired officers who were granted a bailiwick as a reward for services rendered. In 1798, the Vaud revolution erupted, and the last bailiff was requested to leave the castle; carts were put at his disposal so he could remove his belongings.
The next day the revolutionaries came to complete the move of the cellar, which the bailiff had not had taken with him. A more exalted revolutionary broke the various escutcheons which decorated the sides and the top of the fountain.
The castle then became a national property. But the Swiss Republic needed cash, so the castle was put up for sale in 1801. Burghers of Moudon, the Robertis, purchased it and lived in it until 1870. Then a rich French trader, Adolphe Gaïffe, bought it. He furnished it with furniture he brought from France. Thanks to Adolphe Gaïffe the castle includes the library, which you will see in a moment. Two generations lived in these parts, but because of various, unsuccessful speculations, this family became impoverished and put the castle up for sale. Following the refusal by the High Council of the Vaud Canton to consider the purchase of this monument, local people created a society in 1934 in order to purchase, upkeep and restore the castle. This society is still the owner of the castle and has around 1,000 members currently. These members commit to support the castle by paying a yearly Frs. 65 subscription. The business of the castle is managed by a committee of seven volunteer members elected by the General Assembly. Following a difficult start due to lack of funding, the Society decided to let the public rent the ground floor rooms for company banquets, receptions, weddings, anniversaries, congresses etc. Thanks to the income generated from event rentals, member subscriptions and visitor entry fees, and especially thanks to the support of the Loterie Romande, various foundations and a few corporations, we can keep this monument in good condition and present it to the public.
As is the case for all ancient buildings, this one needs constant care. I would like to point out to history buffs that the www.swisscastles.ch website gives a lot more details on the history of the castle.

Now you will walk through the living quarters of this home. This is not a museum, but you will discover the apartment in which a rich trading family from the last century lived, among 18th century furniture for a large part.

André Locher, President of the Society for the Preservation of the Castle of Oron