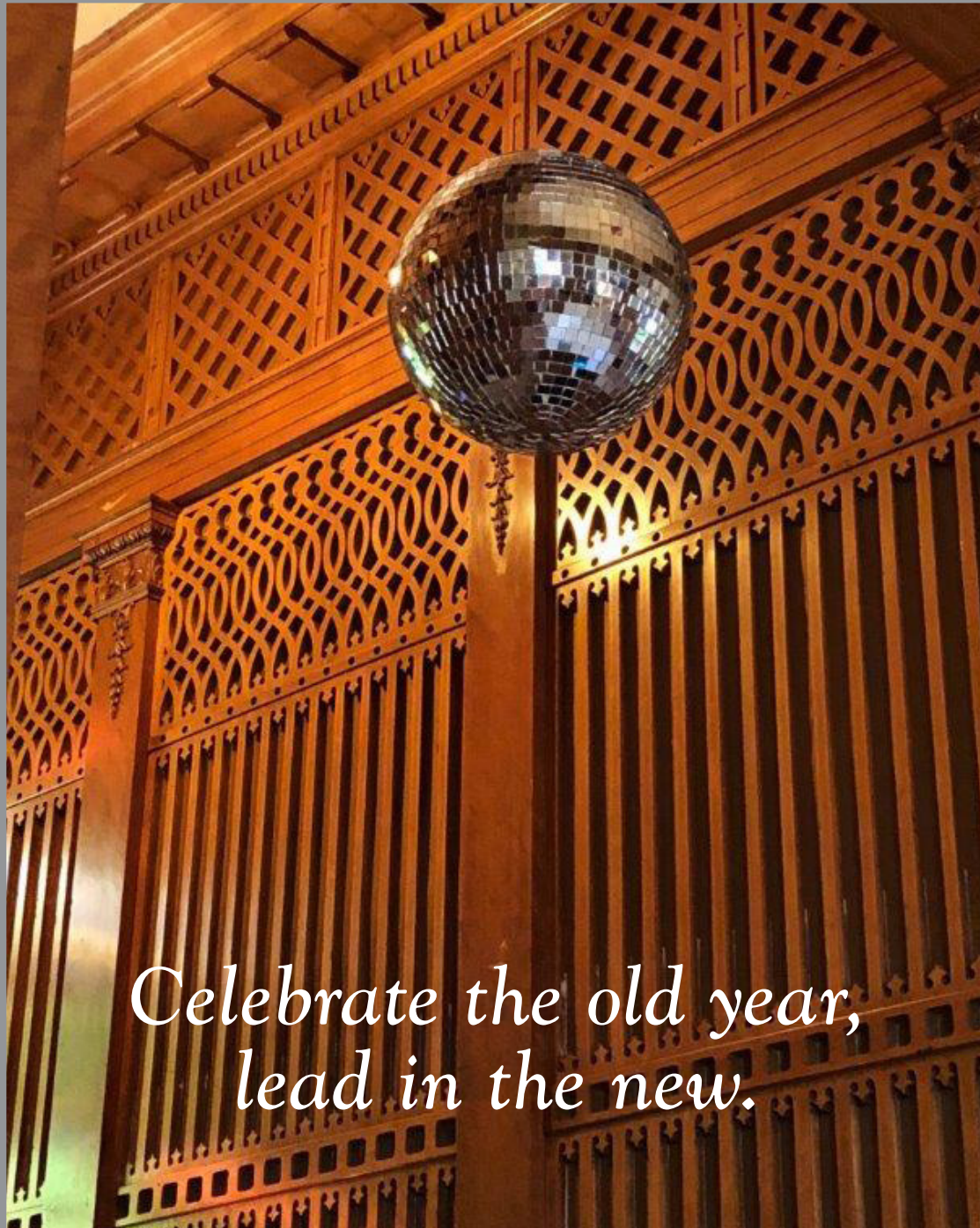


# *Castle* WATCH

A Joslyn Castle Publication

Winter 2018



*Celebrate the old year,  
lead in the new.*



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*The Castle's Restored Steps*

## A MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SIDNEY GNANN



*What's going on at the Castle?*

That's been my favorite question throughout 2018. In the past year our team of Castle staff and volunteers have been hard at work offering new and exciting ways for people to connect with our community of friends. We think folks are noticing too! Here's a list of new happenings during 2018:

Speakeasy Series • Sarah Joslyn honored at Durham Museum's Trailblazing Women of Omaha • TEDxOmaha Adventures at the Castle • Adventure site of Nebraska Statewide Arboretum • Keyholder Membership program created • Pollinator Habitats Lecture in partnership with Nebraska Science Festival • Awarded Pollinator Habitat Certification through UNL • Castlepalooza Festival • Summer Fun Series • Keyholder Member Appreciation party • Maha Music Festival Community Partner • Castle Quiz Trivia hosted by History Nebraska • Partnership with Metro Community College on Art and Literary Festival • Two nights of Masquerade at the Castle • Joslyn Castle conversation at the TEDxOmaha Main Event • KVNO Classical Kids at the Art & Literary Festival • Teacher training for *A Mural Adventure* to educate area youth about Eugene Kingman's work.

Phew! It's been a fun and crazy ride and we're not planning to stop any time soon. As we prepare for 2019 much more is in store. We have started a series of listening sessions that are feeding into strategic planning to be completed in the second half of the year. A strategic plan is essential as we work to assure that the Joslyn Castle Trust is sustainable and able to protect the Castle property and legacy for future generations.

True to form, Sarah Joslyn at her passing, gave all to the people of her city disbursing much of her wealth to local charities. She did not choose to endow her home, instead leaving the task of preserving her and George's legacy to us. With your help we will succeed in sharing the art of design and craft that is the Joslyn estate and the legacy of this early Omaha success story.

In the pages that follow you'll see stories of the donors and volunteers who make this dream come true. You'll find a long list of restoration projects completed in 2018 (check out our new front stairs!). You'll also get details about our year end campaign, and the challenge we've been issued. We hope that you'll be inspired to play some part in carrying the Joslyn's torch forward. And, we look forward to seeing you at the Castle in 2019!

## A MESSAGE FROM BOARD PRESIDENT, JOHN DECHANT

I'm guessing I'm not the only one who takes stock of things around this time of year and says, "Where did the year go?" Every year, it seems, goes faster than the one before.

So what *did* happen in 2018? In the case of Joslyn Castle, a lot!

While it's fresh in my mind, I'd like to take a moment to recap the busy end to the programming season. Universally, everyone I talked to who attended Tales of Poe had wonderful things to say. Any time the Castle staff has a chance to add dates to the calendar due to high demand, it's a good thing. I received equally positive feedback from attendees of the Hudson River excursion in October and Masquerade at the Castle. Well done to all involved.

The restoration of the Castle front steps that concluded early this fall was another feather in the cap of all of us who care about this wonderful place. The project can serve as a model for additional restorations beyond 2018. A need was identified, funds were raised, plans were made, and work was completed—mostly on schedule. In particular, I'd like to thank Executive Director Sidney Gnann and Board Member and Vice President of Buildings Matt Wegener for their leadership on the steps project. Matt's professional expertise was a great asset.

Speaking of models that should work well in the future, 2018's Castlepalooza—a new, one-of-a-kind event for Joslyn Castle—helped set the foundation for future outdoor programs. Staff members Kelli Bello, Janice Pickering, Mary Parrish, Krystal Herrmann, Trevor King, and Martin Digiacommo did a remarkable job of carrying off Executive Director Gnann's vision for the event. Castlepalooza can become a model for making use of the wonderful outdoor spaces on the grounds of the Castle.



Be sure to read the profile of Board Member Francie Prier in this issue. Francie and the Guild have been faithful supporters of the Castle, the property, and our programming, and her story recaps a few of the many improvements the Guild has made to the Castle interior.

Indeed, there is much to be proud of in 2018. I'd like to thank Sidney and his staff, the wonderful group of volunteers they've assembled, everyone on the Guild, and others throughout the community that have helped support the Joslyn Castle. We appreciate all that you do, and we're counting on your help going forward as we look to make 2019 and beyond a great time for Joslyn Castle.

## A MESSAGE FROM GUILD PRESIDENT, JEANIE OWEN



Another year has almost passed and we are celebrating all the wonderful things that have happened at the Castle. I am so proud to be leading an organization that has done so much for the Castle, and you will find many articles in this issue that celebrate the contributions from the Guild. The most recent, of course, is the Patron Launch Party leading up to the Historic

Home Tour. It was a huge success as always, and we surpassed last year's number of boutiques that displayed and sold their wares at this anticipated event. Our silent auction was also a big success and we sincerely thank the people who donated items. They were snapped up quickly and we are so appreciative of the involvement of our members. We have many projects in the works for 2019 and we hope you continue to support the Castle.

## MEET OUR DOCENT, LESLEY AKERS



Originally from Fremont, Nebraska, Lesley moved to Omaha after graduating from college and securing a teaching position in the Papillion-La Vista Public School District. She stayed in the PLV District for 37 years, teaching elementary and special education students.

Lesley first became involved with Joslyn Castle through a wonderful coincidence. Ten years ago, soon after her retirement from teaching, Lesley happened to meet Judy Alderman at a UNO luncheon. Judy, who was Tour and Volunteer Coordinator for Joslyn Castle at that time, told Lesley about the development of the Violet's World tours at Joslyn Castle and enlisted her to help.

Lesley soon became a regular in the Violet's World tour staff, guiding hundreds of children as they visited the Castle and learned about the history of the Joslyn family in Omaha. She gradually expanded her repertoire to include standard adult tours, both public and charter. She continues to be a mainstay in Joslyn Castle's tour schedule.

She loves seeing the awe in visitors' faces as they first enter the Castle, and then seeing it turn to understanding and appreciation as they are guided through the house and hear about its history. She loves to send them away happy, having had a positive experience at the Castle.

Lesley's favorite rooms in the Castle are Violet's light and airy bedroom and Sarah Joslyn's beautifully restored office.

Lesley stays very busy in her retirement, volunteering regularly at the Kountze Memorial Lutheran Church food pantry, taking piano lessons, crocheting, reading, and enjoying coffee breaks with friends. Her husband, Jim, is fully supportive of Lesley's involvement at the Castle, as are their two beagles.

### ADDITIONS TO VOLUNTEER DOCENT STAFF

The many programs and events at Joslyn Castle wouldn't be possible without the support of our volunteers. A small army of dedicated volunteers perform a variety of tasks around the Castle, serving as hosts for programs and events, leading tours, providing administrative support, and tending to the beautiful gardens on the estate. Five new volunteers joined the docent staff in 2018: Nanci Buckley, Bobbet Grimm, Donna Hewlett, Agnes Reidman, and Karla Schultz have undergone training as Castle tour docents, and are providing valuable support for our programs and various functions. The Castle is grateful for these new additions to our volunteer corps! If you are interested in volunteering in any capacity at the Castle, please contact Keith Hart, Tour and Membership Coordinator, at [khart@joslyncastle.com](mailto:khart@joslyncastle.com) or 402-595-1415.

## REFLECTING ON A YEAR OF RESTORATION AND GROWTH

### 2018 COMPLETED PROJECTS

- Front Steps Restoration
- Wood Floor Refinishing – Second Floor
- New Chandeliers and Sconces
- Servants' Staircase Plaster Work
- Wood Refinishing and Conditioning
- Secretary Desk Recreation
- Pollinator Habitats
- Fruit Orchard
- Sarah Joslyn Bedroom Floral Motif
- New Oriental Carpets
- Circassian Walnut Dining Set in Servant's Quarters
- New Mirrors, Art, and Historic Photos
- Linen Closet Renovation

*"We shape our buildings; thereafter, our buildings shape us."* – Winston Churchill

This year has been transformative for the physical structures and grounds of the Joslyn Castle estate. From the large-scale projects (front steps), to the smaller fine-tuning (curtains), the Castle has not shone this brightly since George and Sarah called it home.

A major initiative of the Joslyn Castle Guild is to lead projects that lift the institutional shadows that still linger after Omaha Public Schools vacated the property in 1989. During a 45-year residency, the former family home served as a government office, where chrome fixtures and white walls reigned supreme. The recent efforts from the Guild include stripping away decades of stark white paint in the bedrooms and replacing it with rich turn-of-the-Century colors, hiding chrome electrical panels with beautifully framed mirrors and historical photos, and pulling up thin, grey carpeting to reveal original wood floors that now glow after some attention from an expert. Slowly but surely, the Joslyn Castle is feeling more like a family home again, and less like an office.

Not to be outshone by the Castle interior, the Joslyn Castle volunteer gardeners really rolled up their sleeves and dug in this year. A bold new vision saw many traditionally landscaped beds transformed into thriving native pollinator

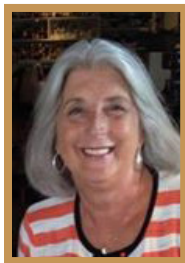
environments. Even the University of Nebraska took notice, acknowledging the Joslyn Castle as a Certified Pollinator Habitat. Our Castle arborist, Phil Pierce, saw an overgrown plot of earth on the northeast property line, and decided 2018 was the year to recreate the Joslyn's original fruit orchard, which stood in the same spot. We enjoyed our first little harvest this fall.

After 115 years of greeting the Joslyns, Omaha Public Schools employees, and hundreds of thousands of visitors, the Castle's front steps and the Davenport Street entrance steps needed some serious love. Deteriorating treads, a cracked porch, and sagging knee walls were creating a hazard for pedestrians, and not to mention...it was not the most attractive welcome for visitors. With generous funding from Douglas County's Visitor Improvement Fund, The Sherwood Foundation, and our Summer Fete guests who raised their paddles high, this increasingly worrisome issue was finally addressed. We are thrilled with the completed restoration and hope to get another 115 years out of these new steps!

Our momentum will not slow down as we welcome 2019. With a project dream sheet that's a mile long, the Joslyn Castle Trust promises to be steadfast stewards of your Castle. We hope you'll join us by donating your time, talent, or treasure in our mission!

This issue we bring a new feature to the Castle Watch. We will be profiling one of the “Friends” whose dedication to the Joslyn Castle helps us remain sustainable as a valued member of the community

## FRANCIE’S FINDS



She’s a finder. A locator. A mudlark. A doer.

All these terms can be used to describe Francie Prier. Her contributions to the Joslyn Castle over the years have become the stuff of legend. Yet the term she says best describes her relationship to the Castle—and Omaha—is implant.

“Thirty years ago we moved to Omaha,” she says. “And I thought I was going to be a transplant.

But now, after 30 years, I’ve become an implant. I can’t imagine living anywhere else. Right after we moved here, the showhouse was at the Castle in the late 1980s. Somebody asked me if I would be a docent and stand guard over one of the rooms.

“I was new, and I said, ‘Sure, I’d be glad to work a three-hour shift. Not a big deal.’ I had Sarah’s bedroom, and that was my first encounter with Joslyn Castle. I thought it was wonderful. Coming from the south, I had been in many old, beautiful homes with old, beautiful woodwork. This one was old and beautiful with gorgeous woodwork, and it just spoke to me. It reminded me a bit of home.”

Since she and her family moved to Omaha three decades ago, Prier has become a regular fixture at Joslyn Castle. She’s been a volunteer, a Guild member, and a board member. And when something needs done—or found—she’s often the person that others ask to make it happen. Without fail, she succeeds.

In recent years, Prier and the Castle Guild have supported the Castle, its property, and its programs in countless ways. The Guild has been the prime mover in sponsoring events that benefit the Castle’s restoration program. Through these events; the Fete in 2017, the annual luncheon, the annual fundraiser launch to the Historic Home Tour, the Holiday Boutique, to mention a few; the Guild has raised a large amount of donations and revenue to support the Castle. Francie has often been the go-to person that makes it all happen by finding sources to accomplish these initiatives.

In 2015, the Guild sought to replace the chandelier in the dining room. The first objective was finding out where it had been made and how much it would cost to replace. The answers to those questions were 1) Chicago and 2) \$50,000. The latter raised eyebrows.



“We decided the money could be much better spent if it was spread out over the interior than on one light fixture,” Prier said.

She began looking online. After nearly a year, nothing, it seemed, fit the bill. Nothing quite matched the Joslyn period, which was a key Guild priority. While visiting family in

Kentucky, a friend directed her to Roberts Antiques, a Kentucky shop owned by a retired doctor. Indeed, the store had many light fixtures that were period specific, and suddenly Prier found herself sitting among an embarrassment of riches. She photographed her favorite chandeliers and sent them back to the Castle staff for a vote. Once consensus had been reached, she bought the chandelier for \$1,800, had it disconnected from its base, and tied it into her vehicle for the lengthy ride back to Omaha.



Director of Buildings and Grounds Trevor King had the unenviable job of installing the chandelier in the dining room. He laughs now recounting the project—and the weight of the chandelier. Francie said she couldn’t bear to watch, worried the chandelier might not be just right.

Ever resourceful, King removed three of the chandelier’s chain links and anchored it into the woodwork to support the immense weight. It’s been there ever since.

In addition to the chandelier, Prier has tracked down numerous rugs that have been spread throughout the Castle, including one in Sarah’s bedroom and two in the groom’s room. One such rug even showed up “not as advertised,” and after contacting the seller, Prier negotiated to have the piece donated to the Castle, saving the Guild \$600 in the process.

So what are the key criteria that go into outfitting a century-old Scottish baronial castle in 2018? Three things come to mind, Prier said. First, items must be period-specific. Second, the acquisitions—rugs, chandeliers, mirrors—should be well preserved. Third, and perhaps Prier’s favorite requirement, is the price has to be right. She’s a bargain shopper, after all. One that recognizes quality.

Like so many on the Guild, she’s doing her part to make sure that Castle survives and flourishes long into the future. Said Prier: “The Guild felt that the grounds were being taken care of and other people were taking care of the operations, so the thing we could do is to make this house look like it’s loved and taken care of so more people will come here and want to be a part of it.



“It’s been a 30-year affair for me. I can’t imagine looking back in 30 years and saying to my grandchildren, ‘This is where Joslyn Castle used to be.’ It’s an anchor for this neighborhood.”

# HELP US MEET OUR \$100,000 CHALLENGE!

Joslyn Castle asks our friends and neighbors to help us rise to a new challenge that will offer the much needed financial stability our historic treasure deserves.

Our partners at The Dixon Family Foundation and The Sherwood Foundation have given us a great opportunity to continue our work as custodian of one of Omaha's great treasures. They have offered a combined \$100,000 of dollar-for-dollar challenge funds to support our operations as we move forward with strategic planning for the future.

As we approach the New Year, the Joslyn Castle hopes you'll consider contributing toward the challenge issued by our community partners. Know your donation's impact will be DOUBLED as we strive to meet the \$100,000 goal.

Gifts can be made online at [www.joslyncastle.com](http://www.joslyncastle.com), or by mailing in a check payable to the Joslyn Castle, earmarked Challenge Gift. Thank you for your continued support of the Joslyn Castle!

With your help we will meet this challenge, and better ensure the Castle's important place in Omaha's history and future.

## JOSLYN CASTLE'S TIME TO ENGAGE WITH TEDxOMAHA



In 2018, the Joslyn Castle embarked on a multi-faceted new collaboration with TEDxOmaha that started in the dark Castle basement and ended under the bright lights on the stage of the TEDxOmaha main event at Creighton University.

TED is a global community, welcoming people from every discipline and culture who seek a deeper understanding of the world. TED believes passionately in the power of ideas to change attitudes, lives and ultimately, the world. As the Joslyn Castle embarks on our next chapter, the alignment with TEDxOmaha feels like a natural fit.

All events hosted at the Castle in collaboration with TEDxOmaha were free and open to the public. In spring, our first offering was called "If Walls Could Talk: Secrets and Stairwells Exploring Joslyn Castle" and was the fastest booked Adventure in TedXOmaha history! Kelli Bello led the behind-the-scenes tour, which took community members through our nooks and crannies, including the original boiler room and conservatory. Throughout the visit, Adventurers learned about the immense philanthropic legacy of the original homeowners, George and Sarah Joslyn.

In the fall, the Castle hosted a Community Conversation about "Placemaking" as a kickoff to TEDxOmaha's 2018 theme "Time to Engage." Executive Director Sidney Gnann led the group of forty community members as we explored what makes a place important to an individual, a group, and a city. It was an eye-opening and intriguing discussion leading to deeper investigation and reflection. Many of the themes uncovered during the Community Conversation are being incorporated into our 2019 program offerings.

We were honored to be included in TEDxOmaha's Main Event "Time to Engage" at Creighton University on October 27th. Sidney joined a panel discussion on stage with TEDxOmaha organizers Strawberry Olive, Wendy Hamilton, and Adam Van Osdel, where he summarized the findings from our "Placemaking" conversation. He made quite an impression in his top hat and tuxedo, as we had to jet straight to the Masquerade at the Castle after the appearance.

We look forward to deepening our partnership with TEDxOmaha going forward, as we feel our "Time to Engage" with the community has never been more important.

## MASQUERADE AT THE CASTLE

After a successful inaugural year, Masquerade at the Castle returned for two evenings this year, giving guests the opportunity to attend on Friday, October 26th or Saturday, October 27th. Guests enjoyed fire performers on the lawn, a string quartet, hors d'oeuvres, an LED and Cyr Wheel performance indoors, tarot card readings, and a photo booth. The weather was beautiful and a good time was had by all!



## HISTORIC HOME TOUR AND HOLIDAY BOUTIQUE

The Historic Home Tour and Boutique is a beloved tradition organized annually by our volunteer Joslyn Castle Guild and staff. This year brought together over 20 local vendors, four historic properties in the Joslyn Castle neighborhood, and hundreds of guests for a weekend of shopping and exploring.

The festivities kicked-off on November 9th with the Patron Launch Party. Guests enjoyed the Castle decorated for the holidays, vendors stationed throughout the Castle, live music, and refreshments.

The boutique continued throughout the weekend, offering fantastic wares for every person on the holiday shopping list - from Grandma to Fido.



As you can imagine, it is quite a large request to allow the public into your own home or sanctuary for an entire weekend. That is just what Ed and Joni Fogarty, Chris Janicek, and St. Barnabas Catholic Church did when they opened their doors for our Historic Home Tour and Boutique!

November 10-11, hundreds of visitors explored the private residences and church as a part of the annual fundraiser for the Joslyn Castle. Visitors enjoyed discovering two homes designed by famed Joslyn Castle architect John McDonald, a Queen Anne Victorian in the midst of a total restoration, and world-class stained glass artistry from Charles E. Kempe.

It was quite the line-up, and we are deeply grateful to these homeowners and Castle supporters who offered up their properties for the weekend. Thank you to our local vendors who made our Historic Home Tour and Boutique such a fantastic experience for shoppers!

The Afternoon  
Christian Nobel Furs  
Carole Dubois Jewelry Designs  
Family Jewels KC  
grae  
Hush la Boutique

Joslyn Castle Guild  
Layered Glass  
The Linen Gallery/Village Lips That  
Last  
MAM Candy  
Nebraska Humane Society

Omaha World-Herald Store  
Periwinkles for Her  
Pomegranate  
Rustic Lavender  
She.La  
The Simple Man

Stella & Dot  
Twisted Sisters  
Voilà!  
Usborne Books & More  
Wildtree

# ART AND LITERARY FESTIVAL: THE LIFE AND WORKS OF EDGAR ALLAN POE

We wrapped the Joslyn Castle Art and Literary Festival: The Life and Works of Edgar Allan Poe on Sunday, October 21st and we are very pleased as we reflect on the two-week festival. Our partnership with Metropolitan Community College delivered 11 sold-out performances of *Tales of Poe*, at-capacity lectures, poetry readings, and art events. In addition, our media partnership with KVNO provided the opportunity to host their wonderful Classical Kids showcase in conjunction with our festival.

The reviews have been glowing! We look forward to partnering again next year and are excited to announce next year's featured author shortly!



Photos by Champion Photography



# CASTLE EXCURSION: HUDSON RIVER AND BERKSHIRE MOUNTAINS

A group of dear friends enjoyed a beautiful trip to the Hudson River Valley in October. While there we toured a number of grand old homes and estates. Each year the Castle hosts this trip in partnership with Deb Covert Travel, giving us the chance to explore historic treasures around the country.

Some of the impressive estates and gardens visited were:

The Mount, a classical revival house designed and built by Edith Wharton in 1902.

Ventfort Hall, an imposing Elizabethan-style mansion built in 1893 for Sarah Morgan, sister of J. P. Morgan.

Naumkeag, a Gilded Age home and garden that was the home of Joseph Hodges Choate on 44 acres in Stockbridge, Massachusetts.

Olana, home of famous Hudson River School painter, Frederic Edwin Church, which in itself is an artistic masterpiece.

It was one day longer than previous trips to encompass as much of the historic area as possible and the participants were very impressed with the experience. Join us next year!



## CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

<b>January 12</b>	<b>Joslyn Castle Unlocked</b>
<b>January 17</b>	<b>Speakeasy Series</b>
<b>February 9</b>	<b>Joslyn Castle Unlocked</b>
<b>February 13</b>	<b>Galentine's Day Celebration</b>
<b>February 21</b>	<b>Speakeasy Series</b>
<b>February 28- March 2</b>	<b>15th Annual Murder Mystery</b>
<b>March 21</b>	<b>Speakeasy Series</b>
<b>Mondays in April (8, 15, 22, 29)</b>	<b>Spring Lecture Series</b>
<b>April 13</b>	<b>Joslyn Castle Unlocked</b>
<b>April 18</b>	<b>Speakeasy Series</b>

## 2019 SPEAKEASY SERIES



We're opening George's man cave again for our 2019 Joslyn Castle Speakeasy Series! After a sold out 2018 series and rave reviews, we're bringing it back.

George Joslyn loved to entertain in what is considered the "original man cave." He and his friends would gather for billiards, cocktails, cards, cigars, and even bowling in the Castle basement. We imagine many a lively conversation ensued amongst George and his guests.

We've once again partnered with some of Omaha's finest aficionados to bring you a series that George would happily toast. The Joslyn Castle Speakeasy Series is a monthly meet up that will feature tastings presented by professionals in their fields.

January through April on the third Thursday, we will host a tasting from 7 p.m. – 9 p.m. Book early as these will no doubt sell out again.

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As of November 1, 2018

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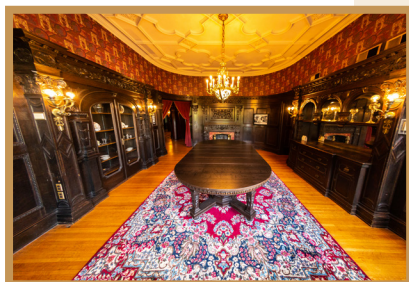
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This is a new portrait of a young Native American woman in Sarah Joslyn's bedroom. It was recreated and donated to the Castle by artist Vija Bolin, who recently completed the floral motif in the bedroom. She painted this incredible portrait with only a tiny, black and white image as a reference.



*Thank you!*



**JOSLYN  
CASTLE**

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