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A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SIDNEY GNANN



This past year has been an exciting period of rolling out new offerings and looking toward the future. In 2018 we started the process of listening to what the community wanted through moderated dinners with small groups from different corners of the city. That process fortified our desire to make sure that we cast a broad net, to really understand how people believe our treasured historic jewel can best

serve the metropolitan area. To accomplish that goal, we worked with a local market research company to survey the city even more broadly. The answers that we heard were both affirming and challenging.

We were delighted to hear that your leading desires for program offerings were outdoor festivals (like Castlepalooza), beer and wine tastings (like the Speakeasy Series), and arts and crafts fairs (like the Art and Literary Festival and the Holiday Home Tour and Boutique). Many other ideas surfaced but we were glad to know that you want what we are already offering!

On the other hand, you also identified our biggest challenges. The leading answer for what we need to do better, from both the dinners and the survey, was telling our story. Specifically, we need to reach more people in Omaha and share who we are and how we're working to secure the future for the Castle.

This is where you can help us! If you're not already receiving our email newsletter, go to www.joslyncastle.com and sign up today. This will keep you up to date on our many offerings so that you can add them to your calendar and bring a friend. Come to the Castle, join the fun on a regular basis, and share your experiences on social media.

All of this research will be used to inform our strategic plan which will be formalized in late November, before you read this. That said, I won't try to predict everything that we'll be working on in 2020. I can safely say that you'll see exciting new programs offered in partnership with other leading organizations in town. And aside from fresh ideas, we'll continue to offer the familiar programs that you've grown to love. I ask for your help as we work diligently to broaden the audience of this timeless Omaha staple. By celebrating our past together, we'll bring an even brighter future.

A MESSAGE FROM BOARD PRESIDENT, JOHN DECHANT

During my time on the Board of Directors of the Joslyn Castle, there's been significant discussion, particularly among board members, about our identity. What is the Castle? Who does it serve? What is its role in Omaha? The region? Beyond?

Identity can be tricky. There's the matter of who we think we are. There's that bit about what others think we are. And, of course, there's the space in between those two. During our recent strategic planning sessions, our board spent considerable time assessing our identity. We discussed who we are and what we can be. There is a lot of work involved in that directive, and our group is excited to take it on. When it comes to the Joslyn Castle's identity, one thing is certain: this place is steeped in history. And there's no running from history.

The identity that we help chart for the Castle should always embrace that history. George and Sarah Joslyn, by virtue of their achievements in business, philanthropy, and communitybuilding, earned the right to perpetuate as more than mere footnotes in Omaha history. They are chief characters in that story, and it's our duty to help tell it. Whatever identity the Castle takes on in its next chapter, history will always be a part of it. It's important



to remember that this place was once someone's home. It was a couple's dream. A city's fascination. And a family's legacy.

And that's all part of history. Here's to the next chapter.

A MESSAGE FROM GUILD PRESIDENT, EDI PIERCE



An excellent time of year! Fall was really a "New Beginning," with the Guild heavily into the plans for the November 8 Preview Party kickoff to the Historic Home Tour and Boutique. We were blessed with excellent weather and both the Boutique and the Home Tour were a great success. The Preview Party was larger than 2018 and this event is especially important because the funds raised go directly to the restoration of the Castle. Now that winter is

upon us we are planning for the next chapter in the Castle's place in the community and the contributions from the Castle Guild.

We are especially excited to reach our 100+ goal for the Guild membership. The number is 105 to date. Our VP Membership, Jackie Hoyt, has been very diligent and has made a grand effort to remind all that it really does help the Castle with the Guild's strong cheerleading efforts. Go Team Joslyn! Hats off to Jackie!

The Castle itself looks amazing. Please come and see the new damask wall covering in the Library. Beautiful. And the restored dining room is where the Guild Board met this October to receive an update on the Strategic Planning effort in November from Executive Director Sidney Gnann. It really does feel like a team effort. I think Sarah would be thrilled.

The Guild wants to express a special thank you to the volunteers and staff that made this year's Historic Home Tour and Boutique a success. The shopping was fantastic, thanks to Polo Davis, and the organization of the boutique experience was inviting and effective due to the efforts of Polo as well as Julie Jurgenson, Teddi Kennedy, Francie Prier, Judy Thesing, Laura Worick, and many other volunteers and staff too numerous to mention. You know who you are! Thank you to everyone who participated in this annual event.

THANKS FOR DECORATING OUR HALLS

Every year, a team of volunteer interior designers and members of The Castle Guild dedicate several days to making the Castle sparkle for guests during the holiday season. We are so thankful for their time and talents in transforming the space.







Design by Kristi Burnett, Associate Member ASID, Ric Klaas, Associate Member ASID and Susan T. McMannama, Associate Member ASID, with support from The Castle Guild volunteers. Photography by Ali Champion Photography

MEET OUR DOCENT, DONNA HEWLETT



The first time Donna Hewlett passed by Joslyn Castle her curiosity was stoked. What was the story behind a castle dominating a hill in the middle of an Omaha subdivision? Her busy life always seemed to get in the way of discovering that story until she retired. Finding extra time on her hands, she googled "Joslyn Castle" and the website popped up. As she clicked and scrolled, the story of George and Sarah Joslyn captivated her. It spoke to her love of history and

storytelling. She clicked the link to volunteer, filled in the fields, and hit "submit." For over a year now, she has been a docent and occasional archivist/database volunteer.

Donna loves sharing the architectural features of the home along with stories of the people who lived and worked in the Castle. The unique opportunity to dip into the archives to preserve written and photographic material helps this avid storyteller flesh out her tours with more historical tidbits to tantalize visitors.

"The photos of George standing proudly in front of a train. Sarah cuddling a squirrel. Violet golfing in a tournament. David, Violet's husband, in his pilot's gear. Violet and David's twin daughters at various ages. Even servants in newspaper clippings. Edgar, the chauffeur for 33 years. Hannah, seamstress and maid for 12 years. Tillie, the housekeeper for 35 years. And Isaac, the gardener who brought Sarah fresh flowers every morning. Each person and detail breaths more life into the stories I share with visitors," she said.

"Another aspect I like about being a docent is meeting people," Donna adds. "Each group of visitors offers a unique blend of personalities. I'm a storyteller at heart and try to keep my groups engaged and intrigued. I also enjoy the friendships I've developed

with other docents and Castle staff. I love being part of this extended family working to preserve this home and its legacy."

Each room in the sprawling mansion has a story to tell. "Every story is my favorite. Some of my visitors say that they feel like I am showing them my home and talking about my family. I take that as a great compliment," she said. "The Joslyns' philanthropy and contributions to the community are beyond measure. Yet, their generosity and kindness to a little orphan girl named Violet tugs at my heartstrings. There is one special photo in the archives of Violet and Sarah. Most photos of Sarah are stern and unsmiling, but in this photo, you see how much they loved each other."

As a former English professor and journalist, Donna loves reading and writing. She also enjoys traveling and exploring the US and abroad. She uses her travel experience to create a strong sense of place in her writing. She has written two novels and is working on her third – a mystery set in Omaha. Could a castle find its way into her fiction? Maybe....

Donna and her husband, Rod, lived a somewhat nomadic lifestyle for over 33 years before moving to Omaha ten years ago. With moves throughout the US and even a couple of three-year stints in Saudi Arabia, they chose to settle down in Omaha. It's been the longest they have ever lived in one place since they were married 43 years ago. Omaha is located almost equally between their daughter, Janna, who lives in Michigan and their son, lan, who lives in Arizona. In their RV, The Albatross, they enjoy traveling to both destinations and everywhere in between with their two corgis, Falstaff and Portia. "And, no, we didn't know about the beer until we moved here. Our pets are named after Shakespearean characters," she said, submitting her MA in English Language and Literature and her MFA in Writing as evidence.

HISTORY IN THE (RE)MAKING AT TEDX FEATURING SIDNEY GNANN



Omaha is part of a global TED community that is created to explore ideas that affect our cultures, environments, and minds. In November I had the incredible honor of giving a TED talk for our local community and my impressions are below.

My "idea worth spreading" was that, although it is challenging, historic preservation is a great

service to our community and the next generation. For those of us with a long-standing appreciation for preservation the sentiment is often focused around honoring the past. But having been a fan of the TED community for years, I've always perceived that audience to be very much forward thinking. I was excited for the chance to share with them some of the ways that our work of preserving the Castle is having a positive impact on our community today and how important it is for Omaha's future.

My talk is titled, History in the (re)Making, and will soon be available to watch at tedxomaha.com. Check it out, and let me know what you think!

2019 TOURS

Joslyn Castle has been bustling with tours this summer and fall! We enjoyed good weather and the gardens looked beautiful well into October.

Our regular Sunday/Monday tour schedule was expanded this year to include one additional public tour offering every Thursday at 2:00 from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Response was good and attendance was strong, so we are continuing Thursday tours through Christmas. As of November 15th Joslyn Castle has welcomed 4,876 guests this year on public tours, group tours, and bus tours.

A tour of Joslyn Castle begins with a 12-minute documentary about George and Sarah Joslyn and the construction of the estate, followed by a room-by-room guided tour of three floors of the

Castle. Tours are led by members of our volunteer docent corps, who not only educate our visitors about the unique features of the building, but also enrich the experience with a variety of stories about George and Sarah and life in the Castle.

If you are interested in scheduling a group tour, or if you would like to become a docent, please contact Keith Hart, Tour & Membership Coordinator, at 402.595.1415 or khart@joslyncastle.com.



The Stella music box donated to the Castle by the grandson of Edgar Rogers, the Joslyns' chauffeur and trusted friend.





THE JOSLYNS' MUSIC BOX FINDS ITS WAY HOME

We know the Joslyns were huge fans of music. So much so, after looking around Omaha and not finding a suitable music venue, they made their home a venue. The Music Room was added on to the mansion in 1907 and at one time housed an 18-ft. Aeolian player organ, a piano, Pianola (compact player piano), and according to Sarah Joslyn's detailed household inventory, a music box in the library.

Much to our delight, this music box has found its way back home. Castle friend and grandson of the Joslyns' longtime trusted chauffer Edgar Rogers, Dr. George Rogers, reached out this summer with some exciting news. While cleaning out their mother's home, they discovered some items believed to have been owned by the Joslyns. Among them was a Stella music box circa the 1890's, and with it about forty 17" metal song discs.

To play the discs, you give the hand crank a few turns, flip the teeth of the comb bar onto the disc, and select Slow or Fast playing speed. The sound is rich, crisp, and fills the room! We can see why the Joslyns would have enjoyed listening to their Stella in the library, perhaps while reading a book or doing a puzzle. Some of the titles from the catalogue include "The Bohemian Girl," "Old Oaken Bucket," and "The Wedding March."

The music box will be on display for visitors to the Castle in the library, and be used to share the history of the family's love of music. Thank you Dr. Rogers for facilitating the music box's return to the Castle.

REFLECTIONS ON PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION

In a 1914 Omaha World-Herald profile George Joslyn declared, "Watch the little things, for many little things make big things."

While his original declaration was upon reflection of his unparalleled successes in business, I find this sentiment can be applied toward the recent efforts of restoring and preserving his stately home. Since I first toured the Castle and grounds over three years ago, the evolution in the appearance, and even the energy, of the property has been stark.

First, a little background. A large chapter in the Joslyn Castle's story was written by Omaha Public Schools. In her will Sarah Joslyn left the future of her home in the hands of her Society for Liberal Arts, who were also tasked with the formidable responsibility of managing her largest philanthropic gift: the Joslyn Memorial. Anecdotally, Sarah wanted to see her home utilized for a greater civic purpose. She did not want to see the Castle sold to a private family or business.



After entertaining dozens of proposals, the Society allowed the use of the estate to Omaha Public Schools, where it remained the headquarters of the school system for 45 years until 1989. During their tenure, the home was adapted to best serve the needs of a governmental office.

Many of the personal touches found in a home were replaced in favor of functionality. Chandeliers were replaced with florescent fixtures. Rich Victorian-era painted walls and murals were replaced with "institutional" white walls. A massive, spa-like master bathroom was split down in the middle to provide separate male and female restrooms for OPS employees (goodbye, clawfoot tub and sauna!). Vaulted ceilings were dropped to accommodate central heating and cooling duct work (you won't hear me complaining about this during our Nebraska winters and summers). An elevator was installed, opening a large channel through the middle of the home (again, not complaining. We are proud to be able to accommodate all visitors to the home).

On many of our tours, we often hear visitors lament the changes made by Omaha Public Schools. "What a shame!" "Why would they DO that to such a historic building?!" Many members of our staff and docent corps are quick to offer heartfelt defenses of the Castle's former tenants. Here is my most earnest retort: how many old buildings that sit empty for decades do you know that are still standing? Omaha Public Schools gave the Joslyn Castle life and purpose for a generation. In addition, they were careful stewards of the grounds, and never wielded their paint brushes against the abundant and exotic woods that adorn the home. We are so grateful!

That being said, a large portion of our mission is to honor the legacy of George and Sarah Joslyn through restoration of their historic home. The home is the tactile entry point into the immense Joslyn story. It serves as a physical vessel for our work in preserving their impact on Omaha and for honoring their passions through community programming and events.

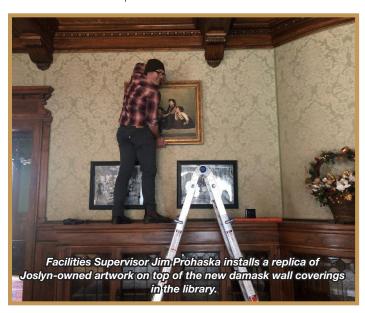






Many people hear the name Joslyn Castle Trust and assume we are richly endowed, when this is simply not the case. We do not have an endowment and are responsible for raising every dollar of our budget every year. Preservation and restoration projects are directly supported through community funding. This takes many forms: direct donations, purchasing a ticket to a Joslyn Castle program, becoming a member of our Keyholder program, grant funding from community partners, joining the Castle Guild, and even taking a tour.

On the frontlines of the preservation effort is The Castle Guild, whose membership ranks have swelled in 2019. This dedicated group of supporters and volunteers raises funds and funnels them directly back into the home. They have been working tirelessly to restore those "homey touches" that were lost during the OPS years. When you visit the Castle and are embraced by the soft glow of a turn-of-Century sconce illuminating a replica of a piece of artwork owned by Sarah Joslyn, you'll know the Guild was there. Other homey touches include new damask wall coverings in the library (patterned after the original Joslyn wall coverings that were lost), a new pull-chain toilet in the men's room, and the beloved holiday décor that appears every November just in time for the Historic Home Tour and Boutique weekend.



One of my favorite recent Guild projects is a historic photo gallery wall following the family line of the Joslyns' daughter Violet, which is displayed in her former bedroom. This addition allows us to tell a strong visual story of one of the most fascinating characters in this cast – can you imagine being adopted at the age of six and raised in such a place? Who was Violet – and where did her story take her?

Guild initiatives aren't always as romantic as chandeliers and lace window dressings; much of their efforts are applied toward the ever-mounting maintenance of the Castle. If you own an older home, you know what I'm talking about: this maintenance is not



sexy and often times very expensive. Whether it is repairing water damage to plaster or conditioning historic wood trims, the Castle Guild keeps us shining.

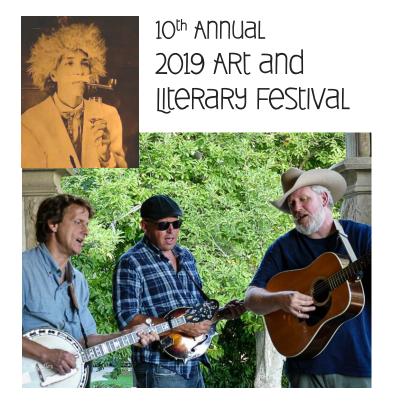
In 2019, we were faced with one of the most pressing maintenance issues in recent history. That elevator I mentioned above, installed in 1957 by OPS, is a bit of an antique in its own right. It chose June 2019, in the height of our tourism season, to stop working. You can imagine this was quite distressing to our normal operations, as we pride ourselves on being accessible to all visitors. Repair bids came in at tens of thousands of dollars to get us back in operation. The Guild didn't balk – they got to work.

The Joslyn Castle Summer Fete, a Guild-led biennial fundraiser, challenged guests to raise-the-paddle for the elevator repair. To our immense gratitude, over \$30,000 was raised in the span of minutes, the elevator was repaired, and we are back in business. Going up!

The examples mentioned above are just a small slice of this preservation pie. 2019 saw the restoration of the Music Room floor, the recreation of the dining room mural, and the installation of a new (to us) turn-of-the-Century wrought-iron gazebo donated by Joan Goldapp. The list of accomplishments goes on...as does the list of projects yet to be tackled.

So you can see how much has changed since my first tour over three years ago. Our preservation and restoration accomplishments are a testament to a community that has banded together in investing in this incredible piece of history. As George Joslyn said in 1914, in pieces each project might be considered a "little thing," but in total 2019 was anything but little for the Joslyn Castle. Thank you for being a part of the "big things" happening here at your neighborhood castle.

-Kelli Bello







This year, the annual Joslyn Castle Art and Literary festival celebrated ten years and filled two weeks of our programming calendar! The theme this year focused on the life and works of Mark Twain. In partnership with Metropolitan Community College and media partner KVNO FM, the festival featured live theatre, art, live music, photography, writing contests, and lectures at the Joslyn Castle.

To kick things off, we invited the public to jump on the Twain train for a free launch party featuring live music from Southpaw Bluegrass Band, a Mark Twain lookalike contest, and a tin-type photography booth hosted by MCC photography students. The MCC Culinary Students even found inspiration in Mark Twain, and crafted small bites inspired by the humorist.

Theatrical performances of "An Evening with Mark Twain" provided an in-depth spotlight to the beloved literary humorist, as we focused on his lesser-known works including short-stories, speeches, and newspaper articles. The MCC Photography department mounted an exhibit throughout the Castle of tin-type portraits captured at the Hobo Convention in Iowa. It was a seamless fit into the literary themes of Mark Twain's catalogue.

The Castle offered free student and faculty admissions for Tuesday performances, and free public events throughout the festival. In addition, KVNO FM, the University of Nebraska's classical radio station and our festival media partner, hosted their Classical Kids concert free to the public to conclude the festival.

Every year, we rely heavily on volunteer and community support to mount this beloved Omaha tradition. The partnership with Metropolitan Community College provides us access to some of the region's brightest talents, including director Scott Working, art director Susan Trinkle Tamayo, and their actors, photographers, and students. Thank you to the staff, docents, and board members who made the tenth year of the Art and Literary Festival such a success by donating their time and talents!

We could not execute such a high-caliber event without underwriting support from our community partners and fellow arts supporters. Thank you to the John K. and Lynne D. Boyer Family Foundation, the Richard P. and Laurine Kimmel Family Foundation, Bob and Maggie Mundy, the Nebraska Arts Council, and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment.

See you next year!











MASQUERADE 2019

Another sold out Masquerade at the Castle is in the books! We had a full house again this year where our guests were able to enjoy fire artists as they arrived, a string quartet inside, a full buffet of appetizers and late night snacks, tarot readers, poker, a glow show, costume contest and a DJ! Prizes were awarded for best wig, best mask, and best overall – the competition was fierce. We look forward to this enchanted evening each year and sharing the Castle with folks dressed in their masquerade finest! Here are just a few photos from our little soiree.











ISTORIC HOME TOUR BOUTIQUE

Imagine that you are in an historic home beautifully decorated for the holidays, surrounded by friends, live music, delicious hors d'oeuvres, and 25 vendors displaying their vast array of wares – a virtual shopper's paradise!

In reality, you are enjoying the seventh annual Joslyn Castle Historic Home Tour and Boutique. This event held in November has grown considerably every year. A record number of guests attended the Preview Party, November 8. In addition to the preferential shopping the vendors provided that night, guests could also find the perfect gift at the very popular silent auction.

Saturday and Sunday, November 9th and 10th, attendees could also visit four other historic venues – St. Cecilia Cathedral and Cultural Center, St. Barnabas Parish House and Rectory, and the Alderman and Henninger homes in Bemis Park.

The weather cooperated all weekend, and a festive time was had by all.

The Castle Guild works diligently on this event all year with a goal of raising funds that will assist in restoring and preserving the historic Joslyn Castle. Keep in mind, we always need your help and support.

Many thanks to all who helped make this event an overwhelming success, including our volunteers, vendors, and historic building

and home owners! We hope to see you all next year.

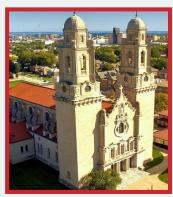
Happy Holidays!











JOSLYN CASTLE EXCURSION

This year, our Joslyn Castle Excursion took a group of architecture and historic landmark-loving explorers to a surprising location, Detroit! The group got up close and personal with the fascinating story of the Motor City and the empires that were built - and the current renaissance of a city in transition.

Must-sees along the journey included the Cranbrook House and Gardens, Saarinen House, the Edsel & Eleanor Ford House, and of course Motown Records!

Join us in 2020 for the next Joslyn Castle Excursion! This is a great opportunity to see what our beautiful country has to offer while supporting the work of the Joslyn Castle right here at home. A portion of the proceeds goes to the Joslyn Castle for our own preservation and restoration. We traditionally announce the destination of the annual trip in the summer - so stay tuned!









ROCKY HORROR AT THE CASTLE



For the first time ever, a group of Brads and Janets descended on the Frankenstein place for a fun evening of Time Warping, sipping on curated Rocky Horror Cocktails, playing parlour games, snap-ping photos, visiting our photo booth, grabbing snacks at the concession stand and interacting with the show! What a fun night at the Castle with our favorite unconventionalists! This memorable evening is another way to support the mission of the Joslyn Castle.





CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

January 2020

January 11th Joslyn Castle Unlocked

Doors open at 5:30 p.m., dinner at 6:00 p.m.

January 16th Speakeasy Series – Rum with Alzuri

Small bite pairings by Miranda's Cheese Club Doors at 6:45 p.m., program at 7:00 p.m.

February 2020

February 4th First Tuesdays at the Castle

Presented with Omaha Conservatory of Music

Doors open at 6:30 p.m., program at 7:00 p.m.

February 8th Joslyn Castle Unlocked

Doors open at 5:30 p.m., dinner at 6:00 p.m.

February 20th Speakeasy Series – Brandy with Kari Korenchen

Small bite pairings by Miranda's Cheese Club Doors at 6:45 p.m., program at 7:00 p.m.

March 2020

March 3rd First Tuesdays at the Castle

Presented with Omaha Conservatory of Music

Doors open at 6:30 p.m., program at 7:00 p.m.

March 19th Speakeasy Series – Scotch with Mary Kelly-Tomes

Small bite pairings by Miranda's Cheese Club Doors at 6:45 p.m., program at 7:00 p.m.

SPEAKEASY SERIES 2020 SERIES SPONSORED BY THE SIMPLE MAN

Save the dates for our 2020 Joslyn Castle Speakeasy series! Take in a brief look at life in George's man-cave basement and join us in the Music Room upstairs for a fun, relaxing evening of "edutainment" led by some of Omaha's finest aficionados of spirits. We'll taste our way through popular prohibition era drinks and nosh on curated small bite food pairings. You can purchase one evening or enjoy a discount when you purchase a Speakeasy Series Pass. These high demand events sell out in record time – remember that Joslyn Castle Keyholders have early access to registration. All proceeds from our programming are used for the continued preservation and restoration of the Joslyn Castle.

FIRST TUESDAYS AT THE CASTLE WITH THE OMAHA CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

A new four-part chamber music series!

The Joslyn Castle is excited to partner with The Omaha Conservatory of Music to offer four musical evenings in the Castle. Set on the first Tuesdays of February through May – each event will feature a unique style of programming curated by the Conservatory. Here is the lineup:

- **February 4th, 2020** Comedy and Music featuring Cody Jorgensen and Anne Madison
- March 3rd, 2020 The Piano Music of the early 1900s (Joplin and others!)
- April 7th, 2020 The Romantic String Quartet
- May 5th, 2020 Tribute to Post Modern Jukebox

HELP US REACH THE NEXT CHAPTER: INVEST IN THE JOSLYN CASTLE TODAY!

As you've read in this issue of the *Castle Watch*, the Joslyn Castle has been undergoing an extended, community-driven strategic planning process for over a year. By the time you read this appeal, the board of directors will have taken the results from the listening sessions and mass surveys and developed a plan for the new direction of the organization. **We are excited for this next chapter, but we need your help to get there!**

An investment in the Joslyn Castle means we can continue to share and preserve Omaha's historic treasure for future generations. With your support, we are able to provide opportunities for our modern community to connect with our founders through historical, educational, and cultural programming, in addition to preservation and restoration efforts on the 5.5 acre estate.

With a new plan guiding our efforts that dream feels like a reality, and here's how you can help.

Here are **four ways** to secure the Castle's future today!

- Give Online www.joslyncastle.com
- Joslyn Castle
 3902 Davenport Street
 Omaha, NE 68131
- Donate Via your
 Donor Advised Fund
 (DAF)

Talk to your Donor Advisor about designating the Joslyn Castle a preferred cause for your DAF.

Planned Giving Contact a member of our staff to discuss including the Joslyn Castle in your estate planning.

Tax ID Number 47-0768416



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As of November 1, 2019

DONATIONS

SUMMER FETE 2019

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Violet (\$2500)

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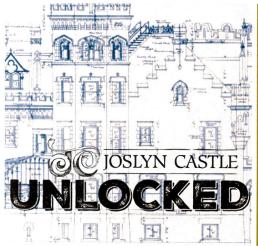
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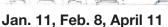
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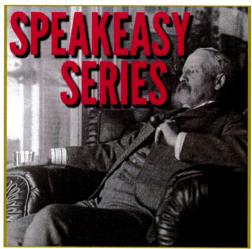




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