

*Owner maintains elegance for more than 50 years*

# Rich history serves Castle Tea Room well

● **Established in 1947**, The Castle Tea Room is one of Lawrence's grandest and most established restaurants.

BY TERESA HEINZ  
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In 1894, retired Civil War general J.N. Roberts built a family castle in Lawrence.

The building's Romanesque limestone arches, iron grill-work and tower still grace the corner lot at 1307 Mass. Owned by Libuse "Libby" Kriz-Fiorito since 1947, Roberts' former residence is now The Castle Tea Room.

With a historic culinary tradition, The Castle Tea Room is one of Lawrence's most established restaurants. Kriz-Fiorito purchased the home for \$16,500 with her husband, Dr. Louis Fiorito, a physician at Wadsworth Veterans Hospital near Leavenworth.

Kriz-Fiorito planned to turn the home into a restaurant with her friend, Ruth Quinlan. After Quinlan developed multiple sclerosis a year later, Kriz-Fiorito operated the business alone.

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**For \$10-\$15, dinner guests can choose from set**



MELISSA LACEY/JOURNAL-WORLD PHOTO

**The Castle Tea Room**, 1307 Mass., accommodates special-occasion gatherings and luncheons by appointment in its four rooms. Chef Linda Norman takes a break in the round room, a former library.

tion only and seats up to 80 people. Its mainstays continue to be wedding receptions, meetings and parties.

Kriz-Fiorito's part-time staff offers classy dining at a

and heavily brocaded Victorian items complement the rooms.

The home's interior beauty is largely the work of Sidney Endacott, an Englishman who carved the wooden trimmings. Roberts had made a

before it was taken over by the Federal Housing Administration.

When an Assembly of God congregation bought the house in 1942, it intended to demolish it and use

## STATELY DINING

**What:** The Castle Tea Room, 1307 Mass., 843-1151. Open by reservation only.

**Hours:** Dinner hours generally run from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Open for lunch only for parties of eight or more.

**Extras:** Available for parties, meetings and receptions. Traditional high tea available for groups.

tions on building materials prevented the demolition.

Firm in her view of the home as a public treasure, Kriz-Fiorito has refused offers from business people to buy the home for its prime location. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1974.

As Kriz-Fiorito said in a 1980 edition of Kansas Alumni magazine, "I just want the town to enjoy the house. There aren't many houses you can go into."

Fiorito purchased the home for \$16,500 with her husband, Dr. Louis Fiorito, a physician at Wadsworth Veterans Hospital near Leavenworth.

Kriz-Fiorito planned to turn the home into a restaurant with her friend, Ruth Quinlan. After Quinlan developed multiple sclerosis a year later, Kriz-Fiorito operated the business alone.

Even though the restaurant has pre-occupied more than half her life, Kriz-Fiorito does not regret opening it.

"It's fun," she said. Gregg Hanna, a family friend and waiter, shares Kriz-Fiorito's fondness for the stately mansion.

"It's like coming into someone's home," Hanna said.

The business is scaled down from previous years, when Kriz-Fiorito cooked and served customers on three floors. A former Cook County (Ill.) Hospital dietician, Kriz-Fiorito moved to Lawrence from Chicago during World War II to cook for sailors housed at Kansas University.

In the past 20 years, Lawrence's increasing restaurant competition and Kriz-Fiorito's declining health led her to downsize. The restaurant is now open by reserva-



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Kriz-Fiorito's part-time staff offers classy dining at a reasonable price. For \$10-\$15, dinner guests can choose from set main courses such as prime rib, fish filet and vegetable lasagna. The meals also include sides of salad, fresh bread, vegetables and dessert.

The Castle Tea Room has a similar luncheon menu. In addition, high tea is available for parties of eight or more.

"I like to stick to simple things," said Kriz-Fiorito, who serves specific cuisine upon request.

The restaurant's fine ambiance is enhanced by Kriz-Fiorito's careful selection of linen tablecloths, Victorian furniture and antique silver settings. The home includes 15 rooms made from cherry, walnut, oak, pine, birch and sycamore wood. Five fireplaces, stained glass windows

and heavily brocaded Victorian items complement the rooms.

The home's interior beauty is largely the work of Sidney Endacott, an Englishman who carved the wooden trimmings. Roberts had made a fortune patenting and manufacturing wooden containers for butter and lard. He employed Endacott, who later became one of Britain's foremost watercolorists and sculptors.

Endacott carved the grand main staircase with winged cherubs, grapevines and trumpet-blowing angels. The old formal dining room is foregrounded by a carved mantel with an altar appearance.

Although closed to diners, a tower room, roof garden and upstairs grand foyer complement the first-floor restaurant. Tucked even further away on the third floor is a ballroom. Kriz-Fiorito occupies the second floor.

Roberts' former home has been saved from demolition more than once. In 1918, Roberts sold the house to J.R. Simmons, a Lawrence brick plant owner. Simmons owned the building for 18 years

before it was taken over by the Federal Housing Administration.

When an Assembly of God congregation bought the house in 1942, it intended to demolish it and use the limestone for a new church. But wartime restric-

tions on building materials prevented the demolition. Firm in her view of the home as a public treasure, Kriz-Fiorito has refused offers from business people to buy the home for its prime location. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1974. As Kriz-Fiorito said in a 1980 edition of Kansas Alumni magazine, "I just want the town to enjoy the house. There aren't many houses you can go into."

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