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The UMB Pulse Podcast

Episode 8: Donaldson Brown Riverfront Event Center

October 21, 2021 University of Maryland, Baltimore Season 1 Episode 8



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Oct 21, 2021 Season 1 Episode 8

University of Maryland, Baltimore

The University of Maryland, Baltimore has its own historic, picturesque wedding and event venue in Cecil County called the Donaldson Brown Riverfront Event Center. The beautiful estate features breathtaking views overlooking the Susquehanna River in Port Deposit. We learn more about this gorgeous property from business services specialist **Jennifer Coolahan** and executive director of auxiliary services **Robert Milner** (6:18). We also get into the spirit of spooky season with an update on how you can plan your visit to Edgar Allan Poe's grave site at Westminster Hall (3:27). And we have an update on the next episode of *Virtual Face to Face* with Dr. Bruce Jarrell (4:40).

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10.15 UMB Pulse Ep. Donaldson Brown_mixdown

Fri, 10/15 11:20AM • 44:52

SPEAKERS

Robert Milner, Jennifer Coolahan, Charles Schelle, Jena Frick, Dana Rampolla

Jena Frick 00:04

You're listening to the heartbeat of the University of Maryland, Baltimore, the UMB pulse.

Charles Schelle 00:12

Welcome back to the USB pulse. I'm Charles Lee.

Dana Rampolla 00:15

I'm Dana rampolla.

Jena Frick 00:16

And I'm Jena Frick.

Charles Schelle 00:17

The Three Amigos are here again. Welcome back, Jenna.

Jena Frick 00:20

Thank you glad to be back.

Charles Schelle 00:22

But we are in the middle of pumpkin spice season. I'm starting to feel the Halloween vibes. Anyone else?

Dana Rampolla 00:28

Yeah, we might have a ghost story later we're going to be talking to Jennifer Coolahan and Robert Milner about the historic Donaldson Brown Riverfront Event Center. And I'm looking forward to hearing about what goes bump in the night in the mansion.

Jena Frick 00:41

I'm sure there's plenty.

Dana Rampolla 00:42

Check our episode description for a timestamp if you'd like to jump ahead to that part.

Charles Schelle 00:47

I'm starting to get the Halloween spirit with all the movies playing on TV lately. Like Gremlins was playing the other night. My dog is named Gizmo after the Gremlin because of his ears. And so looking at it, I was like, Yeah, they match that. Oh, yeah. What's your favorite Halloween movie? And Gremlins is not mine.

Jena Frick 01:08

Oh, what is yours then?

Charles Schelle 01:10

I actually have to say like, Ghostbusters, but also Rocky Horror. Yeah, like I've had this entire idea of like, I want to rewrite Rocky Horror as the Rocky Horror COVID show. Like, there's a doctor in it. And then like, you can have like, a shot to your left in the shot to the right for two shots and then a booster while you hold on tight.

Jena Frick 01:34

That's very creative, but I hate everything about that.

Charles Schelle 01:38

It's a horror movie.

Jena Frick 01:40

That's true. Dana, what's your favorite Halloween movie?

Dana Rampolla 01:42

I'm gonna sound just like everybody else. Hocus Pocus. I love Hocus Pocus a classic is a classic

Charles Schelle 01:49

there's a sequel coming out eventually

Jena Frick 01:52

Which I don't love the idea of to be honest. I'm like it's a classic. Just let it stand alone man. Keep your hands off of it, Disney plus.

Dana Rampolla 02:00

definitely. Jena. What's your your favorite?

Jena Frick 02:03

Um, well, I have a couple favorites. I always watch Young Frankenstein every Halloween as well as Rocky Horror. And then I also really love Beetlejuice because it's one of the first horror movies, horror I say in quotation marks, movies that I had ever seen. I love that one.

Charles Schelle 02:19

That's another one that it's been rumored to be rebooted.

Jena Frick 02:22

You know what? So years ago it was in production or in talks to do a Beetlejuice two and it was going to be Beetlejuice in Hawaii. Yeah. And they had a script it's out there somewhere if anyone wants to dive real deep into that and find it but it's out there and they were in talks and it just for some reason just didn't happen like Michael Keaton was coming back as Beetlejuice and every everyone was coming back, but it just never happened. So I don't know. Maybe in the age of streaming services, they'll end up rebooting it, but who knows.

Charles Schelle 02:54

But that's one that I would like reboot it though.

Jena Frick 02:58

To be honest, me too. Just Oh, Michael Keaton as Beetlejuice is so good.

Charles Schelle 03:03

"It's showtime!" Speaking of quoting movies, we should quote some literature for Halloween to to quote The Raven "Nevermore." You know what that's from?

Jena Frick 03:16

It's from the Simpsons Treehouse of Horror. Obviously!

Dana Rampolla 03:21

After my time.

Jena Frick 03:24

I'm glad you know your Edgar Allan Poe. Speaking of dear old Poe, I know some people are probably wondering if they can visit Poe at his grave site at Westminster Hall and Burying Ground located right here on UMB's campus. Well typically this time of year there are tours offered of the catacombs and burying grounds. But the large tours will not be happening this year because of COVID unfortunately, but there is some good news, you can still visit the Burying Ground to view Poe's grave site on your own. The burying ground is open daily from 8am to 6pm. At 519 West Fayette Street. If the main cemetery gates are locked during those times, please call 41070668824 University of Maryland Baltimore security to unlock the gates. There are no restrooms on site, and limited parking is available or visitors can park at the Pearl Street or Baltimore grand garages, visit Westminster hall.org to learn more.

Charles Schelle 04:18

Okay, we talked about Poe. You know, I just remembered his other poem. We all know Tale Tell Heart. Is it Tale Tell Heart?

Jena Frick 04:25

The Tell Tale Heart? That was also a Simpsons episode. Lisa's Rival

Charles Schelle 04:31

He hears the heartbeat underneath the floor.

Jena Frick 04:34

So we're gonna jump into the heartbeat the tell tale of the university with the Pulse Check. Community Engagement and outreach will be the focus of the Thursday, October 21 edition of virtual face to face with President Bruce Jarrell. That's right. He's back on face to face President Jarrell will be joined by two guests on this edition executive director of UMB community engagement and strategic initiatives. Ashley Valis to talk about The new Community Engagement Center, then clinical associate professor and executive director of Social Work community outreach service, otherwise known as SWACOS. Wendy Shaia, will talk about the programs that fall under her umbrella. The event will broadcast live at 2pm on Thursday, October 21 on WebEx and Facebook visit [umaryland.edu slash pulse](https://umaryland.edu/slash/pulse) for a link

Dana Rampolla 05:21

the UMB intercultural center will present a virtual session on LGBTQ plus history and education in Baltimore City at noon on Wednesday, October 27. The session will educate about the importance of LGBTQ plus history month as it relates to Baltimore's rich history as well as the importance of LGBTQ plus inclusive curriculum in schools visit [umaryland.edu slash pulse](https://umaryland.edu/slash/pulse) for a link

Charles Schelle 05:45

The University of Maryland Baltimore Office of Emergency Management has completed distribution of KN 95 masks to the university schools and department units. If you have not received your KN 95 mask yet, students should contact their school's Student Affairs Office. Employees should contact your supervisor for a video on how to care for your KN 95 masks frequently asked questions and guidance visit [umaryland.edu slash Coronavirus](https://umaryland.edu/slash/Coronavirus). The resources are found under the testing hygiene and health menu labeled face coverings and that is your UMB Pulse Check. The University of Maryland Baltimore has its own picturesque historic wedding an event venue in Cecil County named the Donaldson brown Riverfront Event Center. It features 16 bedrooms, a carriage house with 10 additional bedrooms, two floors, commercial kitchen, and breathtaking views overlooking the Susquehanna River at 200 Mt. Ararat Farm road in port deposit.

Dana Rampolla 06:37

So who is Donaldson Brown? Why is it part of UMB and how can you stay there? Here to answer these questions and more are business services specialist Jennifer Coolahan and executive director of auxiliary services Robert Milner. Welcome to the pulse.

Jennifer Coolahan 06:51

Thanks for having us.

Dana Rampolla 06:52

Yeah, we're excited to have a good conversation today. It's a beautiful piece of property overlooking the Susquehanna river and port deposit conveniently located off of Interstate 95. We touched on some highlights of the mansion in our intro but Jen give us a full splendor of what the grounds and mansion includes.

Jennifer Coolahan 07:09

So the grounds have the mansion which has over 40 bedrooms, four floors, if you count the attic and the basement. It has a greenhouse that was originally built in 1939. It has the carriage house which used to be the stables for the horses. There is a built in stream fed swimming pool that dumps into the Susquehanna River and it is located 200 feet above the Susquehanna that you can see directly off of I 95.

Dana Rampolla 07:35

Yeah, so I think it's interesting because I've driven up 95 for so many years of my life and always looked off to the left when you're crossing over the tidings Memorial Bridge and seeing the house up there. It's just beautiful. And now here we are talking about it today. And it's actually part of UMB. So we should note that the mansion, second and lower level are also accessible through an elevator, right?

Jennifer Coolahan 07:57

Correct. There's actually three floors that we access to the elevator. But for our guests, the first floor, the second floor, when you stay overnight in the bedrooms, does have an elevator access, and that elevator was original to the house.

Charles Schelle 08:09

So let's dive in a little bit more about the house and and talk about like the architecture and what what it looks like inside what's the style of home, and what's the kind of decor

Jennifer Coolahan 08:19

so the house is built in what's known as the Georgian style of architecture. So on the front, when you're looking at the house that looks very symmetrical. It is one of the last houses built in this style. Because when Donaldson had the house built, that style was kind of out and done and on the way out, but he liked it. He enjoyed the houses in Virginia that are similar to that. So when he built this one, he followed that motif. And when you first come up to the house, the first thing you notice is there is a giant pineapple on top of the house, as he welcomed his guests to come there. And then when you go in the grand entrance, and you see the Susquehanna room, the conference room that's there, and you can go off either your right or your left, and there's gorgeous spiral staircases, but no two rooms are alike. So every room has a different size measurement. There's different moldings and every room, the way that they're set out, there's medallions in some room, hand painted wallpaper and another so everywhere you go is like an art piece in each and every room.

Charles Schelle 09:13

Yeah, definitely felt exquisite. It had like an air of somebody with taste and money.

Jennifer Coolahan 09:22

And he did and we actually have records of who the architect was, and who the landscape architect was. The interior design or the Iron Works. When Donaldson had this house built in the 30s. he spared no expense. We have original records from the fireplaces, and he would send it back and say no, no, I want this one redone again. So all the fireplaces are completely different and he paid his workers \$1.25 an hour versus the normal \$1.10 because he wanted the best.

Charles Schelle 09:51

Well, so let's talk about Donaldson Brown, the man who was he and what brought him here,

Jennifer Coolahan 09:59

Donaldson brown was an industrialist and he's not well known throughout the state. But when you dive into his history, he was born in Baltimore in 1885. And he was smart. And when I say he was smart, he went to Virginia Tech at age 13. He graduated when he was 17. To my knowledge to this day, he is the youngest person ever to graduate from there. When he got out, he went through a couple of different jobs. But his cousin Hamilton Barksdale got him a job at DuPont. And this is at a time when DuPont was doing more of your explosives, and munitions, and things like that. So while he was there, DuPont, looking at, you know, getting into the lacquer and the plastics business, which is kind of what we know them for today. And they didn't have a model for how that investment would give them the return for their

stakeholders. So Donaldson, I mean, he was a sales rep. And then he was an accountant. He wasn't very high up the chain. But he made something which we call the return on investment. And we use it today to say, you know, is your investment going to bring you back the return that you need? So he created that impressed the president of DuPont worked his way up. Eventually, he was even the treasurer. And then they, they got together with General Motors. And he worked for them as well.

Charles Schelle 11:09

Wikipedia is out there. And people can learn all sorts of things, but you never know what the citations come from. So you know, I should know for anyone looking Donaldson brown up online, it will say return on equity, but you're saying return on investment. And I understand you have a little bit of research for that.

Jennifer Coolahan 11:25

Correct. When Donaldson passed away all of his papers, even some of his etchings that his wife did, and the embroidery all went to the Hegley Museum, which is in Delaware. So if you wanted further information, I mean, he wrote a book reminiscence of an industrialist. All of that is at the Hegley Museum. And they're the ones if you go to the Hegley website, they will even explain the return on investment. There's photos that can be seen there and further information.

Charles Schelle 11:48

And so this was during his time at DuPont, right. And then later worked for General Motors, which I never knew until last night, how much DuPont was intertwined with General Motors just as part of history, where DuPont invested money and had people on their board as GM. So it was almost like he worked for the same company throughout his his entire career.

Jennifer Coolahan 12:11

He did. And he actually, even when he retired from DuPont, he stayed on the board at GM, and he was there till 1946. I believe he stayed with it for a very long time. That was the time period. So to kind of understand this era, that was when the car companies ruled the world. It was all car companies in Hollywood, and they had all the money. So there's photos of him on the steps of the White House. And you know, it's rumored that he met with different presidents from Johnson, you know, on Roosevelt on down the line and whether or not there's photos of that I can't say but he definitely was the 75th richest American of his time.

Charles Schelle 12:48

You know, as an aside too you mentioned his history with Virginia Tech, and I thought that was really cool that Virginia Tech even has a building named after him.

Jennifer Coolahan 12:58

Correct. He was the first chairman of the Alumni Board for Virginia Tech. And when he passed in 1965, he also gave them money as well to rebuild their center, which is known today as the Graduate Center in Virginia Tech. And they still use that building.

Charles Schelle 13:13

Yeah. And that one time I saw, they did use the Donaldson Brown hotel and Conference Center name for a period of time. So I'm sure that the had been confusing.

Jennifer Coolahan 13:21

There have been a couple of people who asked that question, and is it the same because it's also this beautiful red brick building with columns.

Charles Schelle 13:28

So on top of the DuPont corporate connection, there's also DuPont family connection, so let's dive into that a little bit.

Jennifer Coolahan 13:36

In 1916, he married Gretta DuPont Barksdale, and she was his cousin Hamilton Barksdale his daughter, and Hamilton's The one who got him the job at DuPont. Her sister was an artist. And actually some of the paintings of the family can be found at the mansion, the three children of Gretta herself.

Charles Schelle 13:54

And there was a piece of art that I remember you pointing out to those that's interesting. There's about a wood etching

Jennifer Coolahan 14:00

correct. There is a wood artwork on the first floor that I have been told is able to be found in a few of the DuPont mansions.

Charles Schelle 14:09

And that's where I think a lot of this history is like fascinating. Like if there's anyone out there that can like help research these things. And if there's anyone I'd like these at these DuPont mansions and museums and properties that are all over the region, that mean have knowledge like that could help us kind of make those connections.

Jennifer Coolahan 14:28

Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. I would love any of that, because the gist of the history that we have come from their daughter gretta. And their daughter was also named gretta. But she wrote her memoirs, but she moved into that house when she was 12 years old. So a lot of her memories might not be 100% crystal clear, but we take a lot of what she says and that's that's our fact.

Charles Schelle 14:47

How did this mansion, go from Donaldson brown to UMB?

Jennifer Coolahan 14:52

That's a great question. Education, as we talked about earlier was supremely important to him and upon his death in 1965. He willed 20 acres of his 800 plus acre estate to the University of Maryland, including the mansion, the stables, the greenhouse, the swimming pool, the pump house, so all of that went to the University of Maryland. And at the same time, he also willed money to Virginia Tech. So they could also continue their education down there.

Charles Schelle 15:16

Well, let's move away from history and more to making new memories. So how can someone stay at the mansion? Is it on Airbnb? Like, can they call you up? How does this work?

Robert Milner 15:28

So although you can book through, although we do not book to individuals, it does allow for groups and overnight so we have many weddings, many group events, we have some company retreats, we've also had some interesting requests. Some families have combined together and looked to rent the mansion for the week, which we're open to. We've also had some unnamed rock groups come to us and want to rent it for a significant amount of time, because they're doing a concert in local areas. We've also had some groups on the outside that, you

know, just want to get away for a while, and especially during COVID when cruises and things like that weren't going very well. We do get some unique requests.

Charles Schelle 16:06

It's interesting. I mean, it's too bad we could we can't name them because it would be nice to have like Bruce Springsteen, you know, slept here, like the George Washington signs everywhere. Not saying Bruce Springsteen slept there. I have no clue.

Jena Frick 16:20

I mean, we can dream?

Robert Milner 16:23

And if you think about it, when you're doing a concert, I know some of the groups stay for, you know, weeks and months at a time. You know, that's not a bad place to come back to.

Jena Frick 16:31

Yeah, definitely. And we talked a lot about the house itself, and what the amenities of the house are. But the grounds are absolutely beautiful. Like you look, you look over the cliff, and you have this gorgeous view of the Susquehanna, and it would honestly be a perfect place for a wedding venue. What is the process for people who want to rent out Donaldson brown for a wedding.

Jennifer Coolahan 16:52

So it's funny when Dana was mentioning earlier about people seeing it from the 95 Bridge, I will tell you that three of our wedding requests this year, are people who literally were driving across the bridge and said, I want my wedding there. So we just had one on Saturday. And he wanted his wedding there because they always saw it from the bridge. So for them, they had to Google it and find us. There's a website, Donaldson Brown dot com, but a lot of the requests we get either come from wedding sites like the knot or wedding wire or directly from the website, because you can email directly from that site. And then when they email us, we send them the information that they're looking for. And they come in for a tour. And we absolutely love the tours. You take an hour you come in with your spouse, mother, a friend, whatever makes you happy, and you walk the property and see if it fits you because you get there. You look at Port deposit, you look at the bridge, and you look at the Susquehanna, you're 200 feet up, and it's breathtaking. Like the place sells itself. It is so amazing. It's like stepping back in history. And we're so proud of it.

Jena Frick 17:52

Yeah, it's it's absolutely beautiful. And for people who don't have a chance to actually go out there, our office OCPA made this awesome video showing a whole entire tour of the facility and like the outdoor area, and it really it feels like you're flying when you're standing on the edge of that cliff over the Susquehanna. It's beautiful.

Charles Schelle 18:11

It looks like it's so big that you can have your wedding inside or outside right in and also talk about how beautiful it is at sunset. Maybe you should take a tour at sunset

Jennifer Coolahan 18:21

This is it's funny that you say that. We had a wedding a month or two ago. And they had their photographer leave before sunset. Oh my gosh. And then sunset started happening. And all of the guests who were it was an outdoor wedding in a tent, and all of the guests just congregated over more towards poor deposit and just started taking selfie after selfie. Because watching the sun go down and the sky turns orange. I mean, you can see some of the pictures on the website. They're not doctored at all that is truly the way it looks when that sun goes down.

Robert Milner 18:49

I might be mistaken Jennifer but I thought last time we were out there a couple of weeks ago there was a bride that had a tour scheduled and that they wanted to make sure that were scheduled with the sunset and unfortunately the clouds in the pending rain didn't accommodate change that but yeah, it's interesting you say that that you know people would actually build that around their schedule

Dana Rampolla 19:09

it is the perfect backdrop for portraits. I used to be a photographer and just that whole scene looking over the river it's just so beautiful and peaceful and just has such great light and such great visuals behind so it's a shame that that family miss miss that.

Robert Milner 19:28

We actually had a marine wedding over the summer and they had their chair set up right by the flag, which people may also see when they come over the 95 bridge there and that was really nice.

Jena Frick 19:38

That's awesome. That's great. And then, Robert, you had mentioned about maybe Donaldson brown being a great retreat, especially during COVID and everything what sort of COVID considerations has Donaldson brown made for different events having

Robert Milner 19:52

we do follow all the COVID standards. When you're in in the rooms and in the mansion, you do need to wear a mask. Our staff does an outstanding job of cleaning things, we've got numerous comments about how clean the mansion is. And we also follow as far as when you're eating, you can remove your mass when you're inside the dining room. So we allow that. We also successfully during the winter actually had a double tent wedding outside, and they were inside and everybody was required to wear a mask and you know, that successfully went off. So that was a huge thing during the COVID because they had scheduled that wedding way prior before COVID. And we didn't want to cancel it. But we worked with all the necessary parties and was able to pull that off,

Jena Frick 20:32

right? flexibility is super important, especially when it comes to big things like that. What else is super important is food. So can you talk about some of the commercial kitchen and catering opportunities that you all have for different events that happened at Donaldson Brown?

Robert Milner 20:46

Sure. So we do have a commercial kitchen. The caterers love it, they're able to come in and utilize it heat food or do whatever they need prior. We also do have a staff on hand that have catered weddings as well. They also provide for the breakfast the next morning. We also have tons of rooms available not only in the main dining room and the conference rooms during it, but they're also able to overflow into many other rooms that Jennifer had spoken about earlier. I may be mistaken but I think she was like 16 rooms even though we call it the rooms that never end because 16 main but once you start down that track, it seems like they never

Jena Frick 21:20

Oh, I know. It's like a rabbit hole. I walked it before and I was like wait. I feel like I'm in the shining.

Charles Schelle 21:27

With the holidays, when I toured the place I just came with like a million ideas in every room. And like this is like one of those other ones it's like wouldn't be great to just like decorate that mansion for Christmas or Hanukkah and just have trees and everything in there. And it was like snow one day,

Jennifer Coolahan 21:42

they do have a really large tree that they put up Come winter. Wow. And then we do it. We do a brunch we do a holiday brunch at the beginning of December, which is the one time where like anybody can come we had people from the university come before, and they'll come up but the tree is I mean, you've seen how high the ceilings are. And the tree almost hits the ceilings and it's the first thing you see when you walk in the best place to be at that time of year. We have a brunch open to the public, so it's going to be December 4 this year. And if there's enough interest we might even go the week after we haven't really decided yet. But you get to taste Evelyn's delicious cookies pre COVID we did a waffle bar, which was super cool because you let a bunch of people take whipped cream and syrup and toppings and they make their own blueberry sauce and stuff like that. So we did things like that. So not 100% sure what they're gonna whip up this year, but we are definitely having a brunch in December.

Charles Schelle 22:29

keep my eye out for sure.

Jena Frick 22:31

Yeah,

Dana Rampolla 22:31

so talking about the holidays. Robert, what else? What other things do you do to make the place really look special.

Robert Milner 22:38

So that's a good point. Thank you. So we actually put down garlin down the stairwells. And if you've ever been or if you've been on the video that was mentioned earlier, you'll see the picture has stairwells that go up to the next level. When we put the garland down and compensate with the tree, it really makes a nice background picture. We've had numerous people who would like to get their pictures taken

Dana Rampolla 22:57

there, and you're calling it a stairwell. But they're actually these two enormous staircases that are open. They're spiral. They're they're so breathtaking. There's windows along the stairs

Jena Frick 23:08

so it looks like something Cinderella left her slipper on.

Charles Schelle 23:13

It looks like one of those like 1940s movies where like someone's coming down the stairs.

Jennifer Coolahan 23:17

And with that symmetry of the house one curves right and one curves left. So if you really look at them, one goes one way one goes the other.

Robert Milner 23:23

It's funny, though, that you bring that up about the areas that go around there, myself and our maintenance chief john out there was out in the yard one day pre wedding planning, and the group had gotten out there and I believe the mom of the bride or the mom and the groom and said, you know, how do you guys do all this by yourself. And, you know, john looked over the river and said, You know, when you have a view like this, and it's the same for in the house, you know, when you have that view every day, it makes you want to come to work as far as you know, seeing the building, knowing what it looks like knowing the potential of it. So that's always huge for the staff out there.

Dana Rampolla 23:54

Yeah, it is beautiful. Well, are there any other types of events that you would be open to hosting or even entertaining conversations about?

Robert Milner 24:03

Sure. So this weekend, we're having a women's retreat. So you know that we've had women's retreat as well as spiritual groups in the past because you know, if you want that quiet, you know, spiritual feeling, obviously, the grounds and the mansion itself provides that. We also have everything from bridal showers, to meditation groups overnights, we have a holiday brunch that Jennifer had mentioned. We're also interested in doing a murder mystery dinner. We feel like

Jena Frick 24:30

Oh, perfect setting for that.

Robert Milner 24:33

That's what we all said it'll take us back to the game of clue.

Dana Rampolla 24:37

But we all want to be invited for sure. So

Jena Frick 24:40

that's kind of perfect because you guys have like a billiards room and a parlor and

Robert Milner 24:45

dining room or colonel mustard.

Charles Schelle 24:48

Mrs. peacock. Maybe we could reenact that Hulu show Only murders in the building. Do a podcast on it

Jena Frick 24:56

but around the murder mystery party Yeah.

Charles Schelle 25:00

Has the entire murder mystery portrait

Dana Rampolla 25:02

you should reach out to to learn about how to partner

Robert Milner 25:05

So if you don't mind, I'll back up. We're still we have more we have more acoustic music out on the lawns. That's something that we think has a lot of potential. And we also hold Cecil County Chamber meetings there. We've also did business card exchanges. We've done anniversaries. We've also done we had someone inquire about Was it a 90th birthday or 100 birthday, the lady was gonna throw herself and then we do junior and senior problems out there as well.

Dana Rampolla 25:30

That's incredible. Well, if somebody is interested in booking or partnering with you to host an event, how would they go about doing that.

Jennifer Coolahan 25:37

So you have a couple of different options for that. We are a little old school and if you call the number you'll get Sue or Evelyn right away during the week, you can always go to the website, Donaldson brown COMM And there is a place there, where you can email directly to the Donaldson brown email and it'll come directly to them. You can go on the wedding websites, if a wedding is what you're looking for, of course, and go through that way as well.

Dana Rampolla 25:59

Sounds good. Well, let's change gears for a little bit. Let's talk a little bit about the the interesting quirks of the mansion. You mentioned the pineapples earlier, so I know that that's the that's the thing. Tell us about the pineapples.

Jennifer Coolahan 26:12

So there are multiple pineapples that can be found throughout the house. And when I first went up there, I didn't even notice the one on the roof, which Silly me but you'll notice the door knocker is a pineapple. And then maybe you'll notice that there's pineapples on one of the chandelier ears. And then maybe you'll notice that it's in a picture and the posters on different beds. So how many pineapples there are is actually a mystery even to us, because every time we count, we then find a new one. So then we have to recount again. So the question is how many pineapples are there and they were very welcoming. Their family was phenomenally welcoming. Howard Hughes has been there, they sold their yacht to him. You know, as we we'd say, had weddings up there. The daughter gretta got married up there. So they they enjoyed entertaining, they enjoyed people, people coming in, they had garden tours and things like that. So welcoming was a big part of it. I mentioned the wallpaper that's in the breakfast room. So it's this hand painted Chinese wallpaper that they originally had. So when you look at it, there's no repeating scenes like you see in wallpaper. Usually, if you ever get a chance to you guys have seen it, but it's absolutely spectacular to see because the ceilings are so high. And the paper goes all the way up to the crown molding that's in that room. In the dining room. There's the medallions on the ceiling, and the original chandelier that comes down. The crystal chandelier is absolutely breathtaking. There is the 1929 Steinway piano is that they moved up in that little elevator and got to the second floor. I wasn't there when they did it. But it's very impressive to see there are dressing rooms in the two women's bedrooms. So they have I always think of the sound of music, you know, and they're getting dressed. And they have these giant mirrors and you open them up and they have drawers that were built in and it's amazing. There's a laundry chute that we do use from what i guess is considered the second floor but has to go all the way down to the basement there's a dumbwaiter that we use to this day to bring the groceries up and down when we come in. There are original paintings as I mentioned before, the vault in the basement, which I know that Dana loves there is a giant vault in the basement that when back in the dark ages in the different groups like the FBI or the CIA would come they would keep their papers in there and the vault wasn't enough so they put a safe inside the vault to lock up all their papers. And that small safe that's in our giant vault correct me if I'm wrong, Robert but we can't open that to this day and we're not really sure what's in there. No and I don't think we want to know to keep the story going on what could be in there

Dana Rampolla 28:31

Wow, that's interesting.

Jena Frick 28:33

Wow.

Charles Schelle 28:34

There's like someone maybe from the History Channel should come out with like, yeah, you can like pick up pick a lock or something

Dana Rampolla 28:42

or some special little microscope that you can not microscope, but a scope that you can somehow see what's in there.

Jennifer Coolahan 28:48

you put it in your ears. Yeah, here it is. I turn the tumbler.

Dana Rampolla 28:53

Jennifer, what about the walls? I know you told me a story about why they're all concrete. Right?

Jennifer Coolahan 28:58

Right. So when they built the house, Donaldson brown his original house, which was in Irving on the Hudson in New York, it had burned in the 20s. His children were saved by his staff, and it scared him It scared him a lot. So when he built this house atop the mountain, he did what they call skyscraper construction. Correct, Robert correct.

Robert Milner 29:16

If you go to the top of the attic, you actually see the steel beams that you would also see when they were building those skyscrapers up in Chicago and some of the biggest cities.

Jennifer Coolahan 29:26

And if you look online at the time the house was built. So he bought the property in 1936 from Dr. Franz, Dr. Franz actually ran for president the united states against Herbert Hoover just to give you a little bit of history. So if you look at who was ruling the world then and where the political climate was, there was a fear of a world war coming so when he was building the house, he was making sure that that house would withstand anything that might actually happen here. So he built it to last in case of fire. There's even as we were talking about unique features, there's a fire escape which is unheard of in most mansions, but you go in there's a fire escape to get from the top all the way down

Robert Milner 30:00

Actually, I may be mistaken or anywhere from 18 to two feet thick, especially if you go down in the basement. You can see that goodness.

Dana Rampolla 30:06

Wow, having lived through two house fires in my life, I think that sounds like a really smart idea. You did mention the attic, Jen. So having been up there Can we talk a little bit about what that attic space is like because I think of a creaky little old attic where you have to duck when you walk around humongous.

Jennifer Coolahan 30:26

everything's so big in that house and done well. So it has the peak of the roof is up there. And it has these beautiful circle windows with really interesting window panes and you can see them when you first pull in. But the space up there. It's like you said Dana, it's ginormous. And they even built in where you would think it's a wall. You can open all those up. And those are cupboards and we keep furniture and things in there. The attic is impressive. And there's even a ladder and I know Roberts gone out and he's been brave enough to go up there and you can stand on the roof. I'm not that brave. But you can go up that ladder and you can stand on the where there's a flat part of the roof and even a better view.

Dana Rampolla 31:04

Yeah, I actually went up there. And I think one of the most impressive things about Donaldson Brown is just how you can see the Susquehanna from so many places. There's so many vantage points, and that is one of the best ones in the mansion. You just see for miles and miles. It's stunning.

Jena Frick 31:24

I don't blame you. I did go up there also and was terrified because I was there. So I was like, Okay, I might as well like have to since I'm here.

Charles Schelle 31:34

Speaking of like the wall features earlier and everything, did we talk about the cow molding,

Jennifer Coolahan 31:40

we did not talk about that, thank you for remembering that. So when you first look at the molding, which is in what we call the saucepan of room, it's one of our conference rooms. It just looks like this gorgeous white molding. But when you go up on it, you will notice that there are cow faces. And the reason for that is when he bought the 700 acres, it was a dairy farm. So he bought it as a dairy farm. And he kept it as a dairy farm. It was actually one of the best in the nation. And he put cow molding on his walls.

Jena Frick 32:09

That's so interesting. And probably indicative of my next question, which is about the carriage house. So can you tell us a little bit about the history of the carriage house?

Robert Milner 32:18

Sure. So it was it was originally a stable for the horses and the university and turned it in, if you will to like a dormitory, when we had our School of Dentistry clinics up there that used to provide dental clinic services to the community up there. And it's also overflow for us. We also believe there's potential for some educational uses is what we're looking at. And then we've had some groups that may be interested in renting it as I mentioned before, from the spiritual side, or from a more long term side where they've had workers or additional staff that they were like to provide not only the mansion, but also maybe where they they could just come in and spend the night for a week or a month and then come up to the mansion for breakfast on certain days.

Charles Schelle 32:58

Can you detail a little bit about like the like the size and style of those rooms and how they compare to like the mansion rooms like maybe these the carriage house would be better fit for, as you said certain maybe groups for like,

Robert Milner 33:09

so it's more of the rooms in the carriage house are much smaller. There are a couple large ones in there. But they are much smaller. So it's more set for people that are going to be there on a continuous basis or for an overflow situation. So our mansion, obviously, if you're going to spend a couple days there we'd rather have you in a mansion. Yeah And so each room was initially a horse stalls.

Dana Rampolla 33:32

Look simpler, right? Exactly.

Charles Schelle 33:35

Hey Now I was saying, you know, this would be perfect for like a little kids camping kind of getaway to miss, like I had like outdoor school and everyone had like bunk beds, you know, and an outdoor school like that smaller type of room. They're just kids. And then they can come out for activities and everything,

Jennifer Coolahan 33:53

right. And the upstairs is one giant rec room that goes atop all of the bedrooms. And it has furniture and a small kitchen and things like that as well.

Charles Schelle 34:01

That's perfect.

Robert Milner 34:02

And unless I'm mistaking the actual hoist, if you will, for the original stable is still up in that room that Jennifer had mentioned at the other end on the second level. So we've opened up the door, so to speak on how they used to get the hay and other things inside the carriage house.

Charles Schelle 34:17

Awesome. That's interesting. Earlier we talked about the Hollywood set features a little bit, but how do people find the property and as far as like wanting to use it for maybe a production?

Robert Milner 34:32

So that's a good question. We've actually had a Apple TV contact us and they were looking at doing things because of the era that it was built there are it provides many advantages as far as what the background and what the rooms may be. We also there's a carriage on the front drive. So if somebody wanted to bring an actual carriage up for filming, it would be back actually like it was back in the old days so we can get that with the back drop in the evening, especially with the sunlight that we talked about before, we also the construction. It's all original. And, you know, the windows, the as Jennifer mentioned in the carriage house, actually the stables have been enclosed. And the window itself has the air conditioner for each unit. So it's all original that we've taken and we continue to do that

Charles Schelle 35:17

Yeah, you know, the the interior of the mansion is just so spectacular. And I think you know, any sort of like interior scenes that maybe a movie or TV show would need, I think would be spectacular.

Jennifer Coolahan 35:28

When the gentleman from Apple TV came, they were actually looking for a post Civil War house, which, you know, the Civil War was over in 1865. So our house doesn't really fit. And we knew that when he came up, but he was so in love with the house and the way it was done. He was just trying to convince his producer that this is the house that you want, because, you know, we don't have any many, we don't have many modern amenities. So other than like, the fire standard that we had to have other than that, it's completely original.

Robert Milner 35:56

And then I think, Charles to follow up on yours, I've always envisioned and maybe it's just me high school or one of our grades, we had to read The Great Gatsby. And you can think back in there. And when we're in the big conference room, and from time to time when we take the conference tables out, like for instance, this wedding, we had taken them out, you can just picture the people in the big gowns dancing. No, it's just that kind of room and then you have the parlor right next to it. So you know that would be a great scene for a movie or you know, a show or something that would need something like that.

Jennifer Coolahan 36:24

And actually we didn't even mention we have the game room. So in the game room, which was initially built to be that it has the pool table and it has the shuffleboard and it's got this gorgeous wood paneling and a giant fireplace with the painting over it and it's probably one of my most favorite rooms in the house because it looks the way you would imagine this fabulous game room to look without all your electric video games of today.

Charles Schelle 36:47

There's literally probably a story in every room. Here we go. So speaking of stories for every room, it is Halloween time, we're in October. So are there any ghosts or paranormal activities any sort of good Halloween story you could share?

Robert Milner 37:03

so there's some of us that are used to the noises that the house make. And then there are some of us that are and Jennifer commented on that.

Jennifer Coolahan 37:11

So things only tend to happen when you're alone in the house. But it happens every time that you're alone. There are stories Sue and Evelyn definitely have stories of different things that have happened and things that have moved in different rooms and again it was built by the browns and their family lived there until their death it's definitely possible things that could have happened in the house and with the murder mystery that we were talking about doing they so want us to do a ghost tour when it's done and then have people spend the night and I just think that is the scariest thing I've ever heard.

Charles Schelle 37:48

What noises are we talking about

Jennifer Coolahan 37:51

so you hear a vibrating crystal rattle and it's very very loud and it's constant but you only hear it when you are alone either in the library or in the main hall

Dana Rampolla 38:03

and so Jennifer you've heard this i'm not saying I heard this maybe I heard this and Robert I'm gonna guess you haven't heard it

Robert Milner 38:13

you know the first time I was in there by myself one evening It was late and you know the sun went down and I was still doing some things I will say that all of a sudden you know with scary movies when we're a kid and you're always like yelling at the TVs get out of the house. I thought about what am I doing in here but I said you know what should I call somebody I said no there's nothing to fear in this place. If I drove home tonight it would still be here tomorrow so there's nothing going on with that. So I stayed in there but I will tell you it's very unique to be in that place by yourself

Jena Frick 38:42

I don't think I would want to do that I'm kind of scared to be at my parents house by myself and I mean they have a big house but I mean it's not Donald Brown big

Dana Rampolla 38:51

I definitely would not be walking down to the bank vault or the attic if I was alone

Jennifer Coolahan 38:52

there's a giant boiler in the basement i mean you know the each you've seen these in the movies right like noises and they open and they shut ours is huge. So it's pretty scary down there.

Robert Milner 39:08

Did you do bring up a good point that I think when you're alone in the house, you have to walk to the far there's room and then once you've conquered that anything else will go with it.

Dana Rampolla 39:16

okay. Well I'm looking forward to hearing I know Jennifer pre COVID you were trying to plan a girls weekend up there. So I'm really looking forward to that happening sometime in the future because everything you've talked about sounds so beautiful and so fun. And Jen and I and Charles we've all been there, but I think to experience it in a different way would would be fun and entertaining.

Jennifer Coolahan 39:36

I agree. And there are some bedrooms that I definitely would love to have as my own for the night

Charles Schelle 39:41

and all new bedding, right?

Jennifer Coolahan 39:42

Yes, we have Hilton mattresses. We're so excited about that. And we have 16 bedrooms, but in those 16 bedrooms, we have space for with 25 different beds from kings and queens. on down the line.

Charles Schelle 39:57

Bring the entire family, your cousins and in laws. Anyone else you can imagine So, thank you so much, Jennifer and Robert for being here. To learn more about Donaldson brown Riverfront Event Center, visit Donaldson brown dot com or call 410-378-2555.

Jena Frick 40:16

Our next full episode will air on November 4, and we will be featuring the UMB cure scholars. The UMB cure Scholars Program is a groundbreaking year round program that seeks to empower middle school and high school students in West Baltimore for competitive and rewarding research healthcare and STEM related career opportunities. We're going to be talking to the program's Executive Director Dr. Gia Grier McGinnis and a couple of the scholars who have been in the program

Dana Rampolla 40:41

that sounds exciting Yeah,

Charles Schelle 40:42

Can't wait to meet them. Next week will be another pulse check where we will catch you up on any COVID guidance that might change as well as an appearance by Etta Kitt to help you with the return to campus environment. So if you enjoy listening to us, please subscribe to the UMD pulse on Apple podcasts Spotify, Google Amazon, wherever you'd like to listen and reach out to us at you maryland.edu slash pulse with your feedback. We love hearing from our listeners. So until next time, thanks for listening to the UMB pulse.

Jena Frick 41:13

The UMB pulse with Charles Schelle, Dana rampolla and Jena Frick is a UMB Office of Communications and Public Affairs production edited by Charles Schelle sound engineering by Jena Frick marketing by Dana rampolla Music by No vibe recorded in the University of Maryland Baltimore Community Engagement

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Donaldson Brown Holiday Brunch

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