

REGIONAL FEATURE

# THE HENDERSON CASTLE FOUNDATION: Preserving a Castle, Creating the Next Super Chefs

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For the last 120 years, the Henderson Castle has watched downtown Kalamazoo from a hill on the western edge of town—a vigilant observer, a tangible relic of the city’s identity.

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places and acclaimed by AAA as one of Michigan’s top three historic inns, the castle is one of Kalamazoo’s most treasured historical landmarks. The fortress has also found its share of fame as the filming site for three feature films and debuts on The Discovery Channel and House Hunters.

The Henderson Castle was built in 1895 by Kalamazoo businessman Frank Henderson, owner and president of Henderson-Ames Company, a military and society goods producer. The 25-room Queen Anne-style house was designed by Milwaukee native C.A. Gombart, and includes seven baths, a thirteen-head shower, an elevator, and a third-floor ballroom. The famous roof-top hot tub was added later. The exterior displays Lake Superior Sandstone and brick, while the inside features mahogany, bird’s eye maple, quartered oak, birch and American sycamore. The \$72,000 dollars of original construction costs would total over \$4,100,000 in today’s economy.

Frank Henderson passed away only four years after the castle’s completion and his wife Mary vacated the property in 1908. In 1957, the castle was purchased as the future site of the Kalamazoo Art Center. When the institute remained downtown, however, Kalamazoo College bought the estate for use as student housing. In 2005, Henderson Castle debuted on the first season of House Hunters International, when guest star Frederick Royce sold the Castle and purchased a new home in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

In 2011, the loved and lauded castle found its tenth and current owner, Francois Moyet. A French Master Chef and community visionary, Moyet prefers terms such as “guardian” of the grounds, and is dedicated to the preservation of the community’s crown.

**HISTORY PRESERVED, A FOUNDATION**

As the sentinel of Henderson Castle, Moyet was determined to secure its future for the Kalamazoo community, and last fall, after two years of arduous effort, he proudly released the news of the Castle’s updated IRS status, to nonprofit status.

“As a newly formed 501(c)(3) nonprofit, our mission for the Henderson Castle is Historical, Art, and Educational preservation” he wrote in The Henderson Castle Foundation Blog. A nonprofit foundation status means Moyet and a Board of Directors now act in the best interest of the castle. It also provides greater opportunity for long-term sustainability.

The full-service fine-dining restaurant and bar will continue to offer acclaimed French cuisine and hand-crafted cocktails, while the Henderson Castle Inn provides visitors a night’s stay in the century-old castle. The inn includes an array of bedroom suites, each featuring a historically unique and intricate theme. The Day Spa and banquet facilities round out the offerings of the Castle.

The Henderson Castle reaches the community through more than exquisite dining and luxury repose. The Castle is becoming a haven of education and involvement for the community.



### THE NEXT BIG THING

Moyet has great aspirations for the Castle with the introduction of the Henderson Castle French Culinary Art Institute of America. It has long been his goal to make a name for the Castle and for the community in the culinary world. In recent talks with Kalamazoo Valley Community College and Western Michigan University, strides have been made to create a culinary school that will graduate the next Super Chefs.

The culinary partnership is modeled after the great Ferrandi, French School of Culinary Arts in Paris, which Moyet is a graduate of, and which is also the top culinary school in the world. Originally started by 20 of the most famous French chefs, future chefs at Ferrandi spend 70% of their time in classes and the rest of their time in an apprenticeship program. It is the apprenticeship program that will make the Castle's program unique in the US.

Students in the Henderson Castle French Culinary Art Institute of America program will spend a portion of their time in school at KVCC or WMU, and part of their time at the Castle. Here they will learn how to create exceptional food and manage not only the kitchen, but the front and back of the house, and the dining room as well. Other course study will include naturopathy (Moyet earned an advanced degree in this subject five years ago), nutrition, and the importance of farm to table. Through hands on training, or the "live campus" as Moyet likes to call it, he expects to turn out the next Super Chefs of the world.

When asked to explain a Super Chef, Moyet clarified for me; it would mean a chef capable of creating a Three Star Michelin rated restaurant. That's quite a goal, as only 13 restaurants were awarded this designation in the US in 2015. If you're not familiar with the rating system, it's a simple tiered program. One star restaurants denote very good



cooking, worthy of a visit. A restaurant that is rated two stars is a must try, with excellent cooking, and a three star is a lifetime experience. Restaurants that fall into the top tier are often booked six to twelve months in advance. Moyet's philosophy is that the "teach and achieve" method is an invaluable experience. He is not alone in his support of this method. In late 2015, Moyet signed an agreement with the Ferrandi school to create a culinary exchange program. Ferrandi and the Castle will send students and instructors to the opposite school for an enhanced training opportunity for faculty and students alike. This program is exclusive to the Castle and offers another method for the Castle to maintain long-term stability. Once the relationship is established with the Kalamazoo Promise education fund, KPS students may be eligible for free tuition. And, for those joining the first ever class set for fall 2016, scholarships will be offered. Enrollment for the culinary program is open, applications can be obtained by contacting the Henderson Castle French Culinary Art Institute of America at [HendersonCastle.com](http://HendersonCastle.com)

While Henderson Castle has always been a warm, welcoming place to stay, with the addition of the new culinary program, the Castle is primed to thrive for another 120 years. □

**HENDERSON CASTLE**  
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