



'THESE ARE OUR CASTLES'



Robert Kirkbride stands in front of the building that is often referred to by the surname of his more famous relative, Thomas Kirkbride, whose work was influential in the design of asylums across the U.S. JACOB TELLERS/DAILY JOURNAL

Relative of asylum designer pays visit to Fergus Falls

By Jacob Tellers
jtellers@fergusfallsjournal.com

Europe, with its thousands of years of history, has countless castles dotting its landscape.

While the same cannot be said of the United States, it still has its own impressive structures.

"These are our castles," Robert Kirkbride said of the former Fergus Falls State Hospital, referred to by many in Fergus Falls as the Kirkbride Building.

Robert Kirkbride is a distant relative of Thomas Kirkbride, the man who proposed an asylum schematic that was used

across the country more than century ago. Around a dozen Kirkbride buildings remain in the United States as well as in Canada and Australia.

Robert was visiting Fergus Falls for the first time as part of the Kirkbride Arts and History Weekend.

"It is fantastic to see," Robert said while standing outside the Kirkbride for the first time Friday afternoon.

Taking a tour with the Friends of the Kirkbride, Robert was able to get a sense of the building's scope and condition. He came away impressed.

One highly important aspect is that asbestos in the building has already been removed, he said.

Of the Kirkbride buildings not yet redeveloped, the one in Fergus Falls may be in the best shape, Robert said.

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Fergus Falls man sentenced for May knife threats

By Jeff Meier
jmeier@fergusfallsjournal.com

A 24-year-old Fergus Falls man was convicted of four felonies Friday in Otter Tail County District Court involving an alleged knife threat in May.

Ramsey Louis Kettle was convicted of felony second-degree assault with a deadly weapon, felony terroristic threats and fifth-degree felony assault for subsequent violations after a two-day jury trial in August.

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Council to consider library project, funding sources

By Jacob Tellers
jtellers@fergusfallsjournal.com

The Fergus Falls City Council will consider two main items Monday — a design for an addition to the public library and funding it through a local sales tax.

The meeting starts at 5:30 p.m. at Fergus Falls City Hall.

It will make a recommendation on the library's schematic design for what's dubbed the Public Library Renewal. The final price tag of the project is projected to be just under \$10 million. Funding could come from a combination of local-option sales tax and private donors.

In addition, the council will receive a resolution to approve the preliminary 2016 budget and tax levy. Once the preliminary tax levy is set, it can't be increased, but it can be lowered prior to the December budget deadline.



Robert Kirkbride speaks with Maxine Schmidt and several dozen people on a group tour of the former Fergus Falls State Hospital Friday afternoon. JACOB TELLERS/DAILY JOURNAL

KIRKBRIDE

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"You have things in very good shape compared to other projects," he said.

Speaking about the importance of preservation to an audience Friday evening at The Spot Panini & Wine, Robert compared the different attitudes toward preservation that the United States and Europe have.

In Europe, old and new buildings are often seen alongside each other, and preservation is expected, not avoided, he said.

The United States has a markedly different view of preservation, one that all too often pits those who want to save a building against those who see older structures as obstacles to

"Preservation and development are two sides of the same coin"

— Robert Kirkbride

development, Robert said.

That doesn't have to be the case, he added.

"Preservation and development are two sides of the same coin," Robert said.

Preservation remains import-

ant, because these buildings are part of what defines a community, he said.

"Architecture shapes how we view our community," Robert said.

While Robert described Kirkbride buildings as places with a complex history were difficult things did occur, he said that the buildings are also ripe for re-use.

"They are waiting to be used with a new life," he said.

His advice for the daunting task facing the city of Fergus Falls: do things one bite at a time, and not all at once.

Robert pointed to the redevelopment of the Kirkbride building in Traverse City, Michigan, as proof that these projects aren't impossible.

"It's been done," Robert said. "It's not something new."