

**NEWS RELEASE**

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**BRANCH MUSEUM CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION SET FOR DEC. 19TH**

***Festivities Marking Completion of the House in 1919 Evoke Jazz Age Exuberance***

1919 marked the formal end of the first World War, passage of the 19th amendment giving women the right to vote and completion of financier John Kerr Branch’s 27,000 sf home in Richmond intended to house his growing art collection. There was so much to celebrate, but so little time. Come January 1920, Prohibition—a constitutional ban on the production and sale alcoholic beverages –would go into effect. We imagine the Branches partied like it was their last and that’s how we plan to celebrate the centennial of The Branch House, now The Branch Museum of Architecture and Design-- on Dec. 19th.

That evening vintage decorations and the return of an important family treasure will transport guests to 1919 and the thrilling eve of the Jazz Age. Live jazz music from the James Joyner Band will fill the Great Hall and Mosaic Catering and Events will provide lavish fare with holiday spirits courtesy of corporate sponsors Cirrus Vodka and Hardwood Park Craft Brewery.

Designed by John Russell Pope, the Branch House is not only a nationally recognized architectural treasure, but a cherished community asset. Local volunteers, including the Fan Townhouse and Garden Club will decorate locally sourced Christmas trees including native white pine, a type likely used by the Branches 100 years ago. Tree trimming takes places on Nov. 25th**.**

In keeping with a Branch tradition, a special tree for children will be decorated with presents. On Dec. 12th, children from the First STEP program at neighboring First Baptist Preschool, which partners with ASK Childhood Cancer Foundation, will attend a private party where they can choose gifts from the tree.

An important 16th C Flemish tapestry, which once hung in the house, returns on long term loan from Branch family descendants. With its celebratory theme of “The Wedding of Rachel and Jacob,” the tapestry, once believed to be owned by Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, will be re-installed in the dining room.

The Tudor Revival landmark was built to house the tapestry and Branch’s collection of Renaissance art, ~~i~~ts 11 levels include a chapel-like studio, a long gallery, minstrel gallery, library and dining room on the main floor in addition to private quarters and service rooms. Its striking exterior includes a complex and newly restored slate roof, leaded glass windows and exceptional masonry detail. When it neared completion--with Prohibition right around the corner-- provisions were made for a new era of hidden hooch and guarded entertaining. The home includes a cleverly concealed space between floors for the storage of liquid valuables.

“The house built as a winter home,” according to Branch Centennial Celebration Committee Chair Sally Branch. “The holidays were always a special occasion and we intend to celebrate accordingly. Guests should be happy to know that they’re helping to preserve the house for the next 100 years.” “

For details and ticket purchase visit: branchmuseum.org/branch-centennial-celebration or call 804. 655.6055.

Branch Centennial Celebration Sponsors

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**CALENDAR OF CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION EVENTS:**

Nov. 25th—10 am – 3pm --*Tree trimming*

Dec. 12th—9:30-11:30- am-Children’s party

Dec. 19th—6-9 pm—Centennial Celebration