

# Culture buffs view new home

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By EILEEN MEAD  
of the Potomac News

Invited guests of the Prince William County Cultural Arts Federation got a sneak preview Sunday of the historic Ben Lomond Manor House, which will soon be used as a cultural arts center.

The Board of Supervisors, on June 12, authorized the federation to operate the manor house as an arts center and public recreational facility. The supervisors also appropriated \$10,000 from the fiscal 1985 emergency reserve fund to support the federation's efforts.

Federation President Shirley Kenney said the appropriation will make it possible for the federation to get the building into operating condition by Oct. 1 when an executive director is scheduled to move into an office there.

The federation, a non-profit service organization formed by cultural institutions and individual artists in the county, will rely on volunteers, the community and businesses for support, she said.

Members represent the fields of music, theatre, dance, literature and the visual arts, as well as women's clubs, service organizations, citizens associations, businesses and interested indi-

viduals.

The two-story stone manor house is located directly across Sudley Manor Drive from the Ben Lomond Community Center, at the entrance to the Sudley subdivision.

The modernistic community center, shaped like a barn, was built in 1974 at the site of the former barn of the once large Ben Lomond plantation.

The federation eventually hopes to raise funds to refurbish the house, a local, Virginia and National Register landmark built in 1837 and used as a hospital during the Civil War.

The house, land and outbuildings were given to the county by Weaver Brothers, the developers of the Sudley subdivision.

Mrs. Kenney said she and other officers will meet with a contractor this week to determine the most immediate needs to make the house usable as an arts center.

The two-story stone house, with fine interior woodwork and three Federal-style mantels, had been occupied almost continuously until the 1970's and appears to be structurally sound. It has been

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rewired in recent years.

Sunday's visitors, including Del. Harry Parrish and Supervisor Tony Guiffre, seemed to agree that the house appears to be in "pretty good condition" for its age.

With the temperature in the 90s, they were impressed with the cool breeze that circulated through the house when the front door and the large double doors leading to the patio were opened. Several large shade trees near the house aided in the cooling effect.

Many of the visitors said they thought that the hardwood floors on the main floor should be refinished and left exposed.

The quality woodwork throughout the house, including the three fireplace mantles, the window seats, the doors and the framing, obviously needs to be stripped of layers and layers of peeling paint and repainted.

The plaster appears to be in good condition, but the old wallpaper should be stripped and the walls either repapered or painted, Mrs. Kenney said.

The chimneys must be cleaned.

The kitchen, a frame addition to the stone building, seems to be in the poorest condition, Mrs. Kenney said, and there have been suggestions that the addition be torn down.

She said a kitchen will be a necessity in the operation of the arts center, and she hopes that the addition can be refurbished and made usable.

To raise funds, the federation hopes to rent the house and grounds out for weddings or receptions. The living room could be used for recitals or meetings. The center will be used for receptions for visiting artists and dignitaries — all uses that would require a modern kitchen.

The house has one full bath and

one half-bath which are in usable condition.

Of immediate concern is the replacement of the three wooden porch pillars at the rear of the building.

Mrs. Kenney said the executive director will help the federation obtain grants, further the fund raising efforts, have fund raising dinners, continue Children's Theatre productions, work at the county fair, and publish the bi-monthly calendar of events and the quarterly "Cultural Arts Newsletter."

The manor house is located close to the scenes of the 1st and 2nd Battles of Manassas.

The builder, Benjamin Tasker Chinn, is said to have sustained enormous financial losses as a result of the war. In 1870, he sold Ben Lomond. From the early 1900s to the 1930's it was owned by a number of wealthy and distinguished persons.

At the time the land was subdivided in the 1960s, Ben Lomond was owned by Robert L. Garner, a vice-president of the World Bank, and it was being operated as a dairy, cattle and horsebreeding farm.

On the land is an occupied log and frame caretaker's house and three stone out-buildings that could also be restored for a variety of uses, Mrs. Kenney said.

One of the stone buildings, the overseer's house, was threatened with demolition to allow construction of the driveway for a church. To save the building, the Board of Supervisors and the Park Authority supplied money for relocating the building from the church property to the manor house tract.

The old barn was torn down in 1973 after builders determined that it was too dilapidated to restore. Following a 1972 sanitary district referendum, a new community

center was constructed on the site of the barn, with the original silo still in place.

Sudley developer Weaver Brothers donated the barn and the land for public use, if the sanitary district voters would pass a bond referendum and start construction of the recreation center by Jan. 1974.

Members of the Federation said they hope that people in the county will get behind the efforts to restore the manor house with the same amount of enthusiasm.

For further information one may write to Cultural Arts Federation, P.O. Box 2144, Manassas, Va., 22110.