

SUNDAY

COMMUNITY

IN SCHOOL E2 ▶

Potomac News

Section E

Under layers of paint, history is revealed

BRIAN KELLEY
Staff Writer

Imagine a way to peel back the layers of time, to look into the past and glimpse just enough to let our imagination and knowledge assemble a vision of how our generations saw and used a place.

A place, for instance, such as Ben Lomond Manor House. Sitting on a rise some three miles north of downtown Manassas, the two-story home has a story to tell.

It started life as a Southern plantation, saw crops replaced by cows, heard the noise of the nearby battles of Manassas, was the result of the carnage of a field hospital, and later served as a country estate, a president's rest stop, a developer's office and, finally, as an office for an arts federation. Now Ben Lomond, possibly

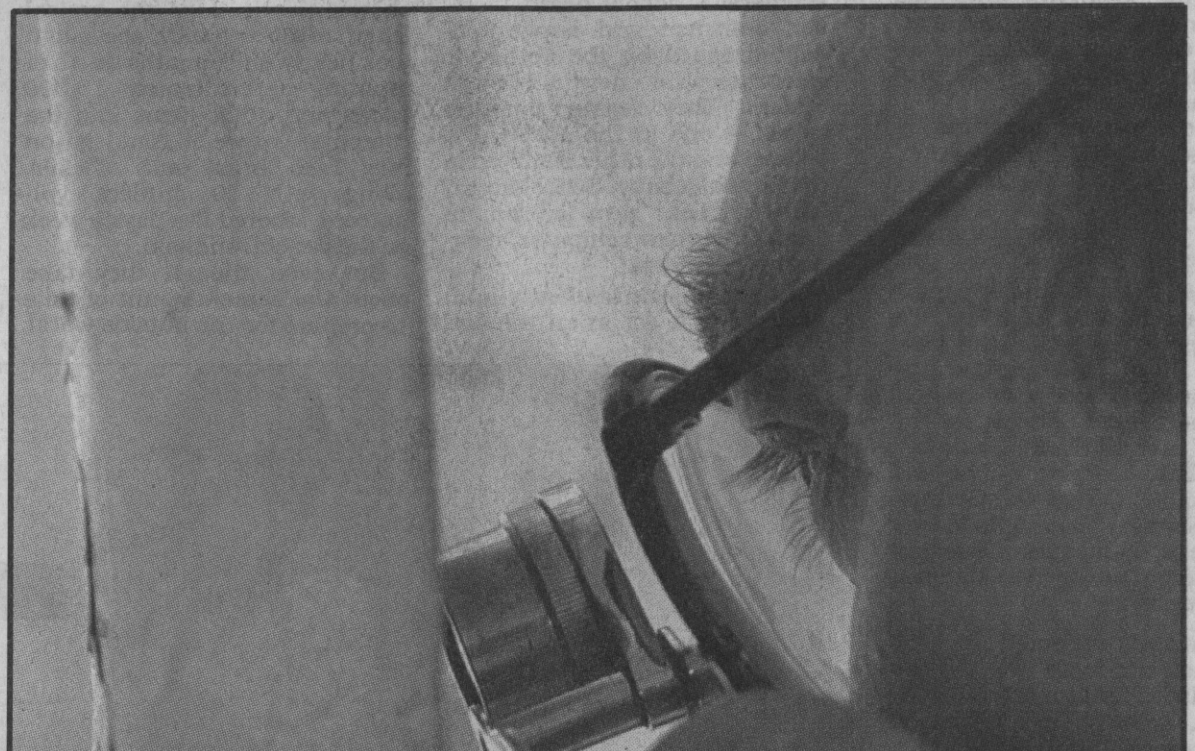
Places

School. Another man removed whitewash from an upstairs wall, with a cotton swab, revealing graffiti believed to have been left by the Kilroys of a long-ago era — Civil War soldiers who passed through to and from the Confederacy's two big wins.

Still another architect used a device to take a temporary image of a door molding. She then used the device to trace the form on a piece of paper and thus reproduce the design.

From such details, explained architect W. Douglas Gilpin Jr., will come floor plans to accompany the photographic documentation of the building.

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n office for an arts federation.

Now Ben Lomond, possibly
amed after a peak in Scot-
and, is poised on the brink of
new era. After years — de-
ades, really — of decline, the
ome is being scratched,
oked, probed and otherwise
one over in an attempt to
estore it and reuse it.

To that end, a team of archi-
ects from Charlottesville
pent three days in the manor
arlier this month, piecing
together the puzzle of its past.

The result of their labors
ould be, by the end of June,
report cataloging the manor
nd its interior as it exists
ow, and how it could be re-
uilt to be used again.

Eventually, the archi-
ectural firm of Browne,
ichman, Dalgliesh, Gilpin &
axton will be able to provide
estoration cost estimates to a
ounty commission charged
with raising money to pay for
ne project.

The Prince William Board of
ounty Supervisors estab-
shed the Ben Lomond Manor
ouse Commission two years
go to get the long-discussed
roject off the ground. By
en, the manor house had
allen on hard times. Its
terior has that musty old-
ouse stink, compounded by
xposed beams, flaking paint
nd other problems that
ould send even the most
esolute handyman fleeing in
error.

The problem, of course, has
lways been money. In the late
980s, as the county tried to
ecide what to do with the
uilding, one official esti-
ated the cost of restoring it
t upwards of \$250,000.

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Gilpin Sr., will come floor
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It is an interesting, if run-
down, place. The outside is
made of a local, reddish stone
and resembles the Stone
House in the heart of nearby
Manassas National Battlefield
Park. But the building may
have originally been stuccoed,
to give it the more upscale ap-
pearance of cut stone blocks.

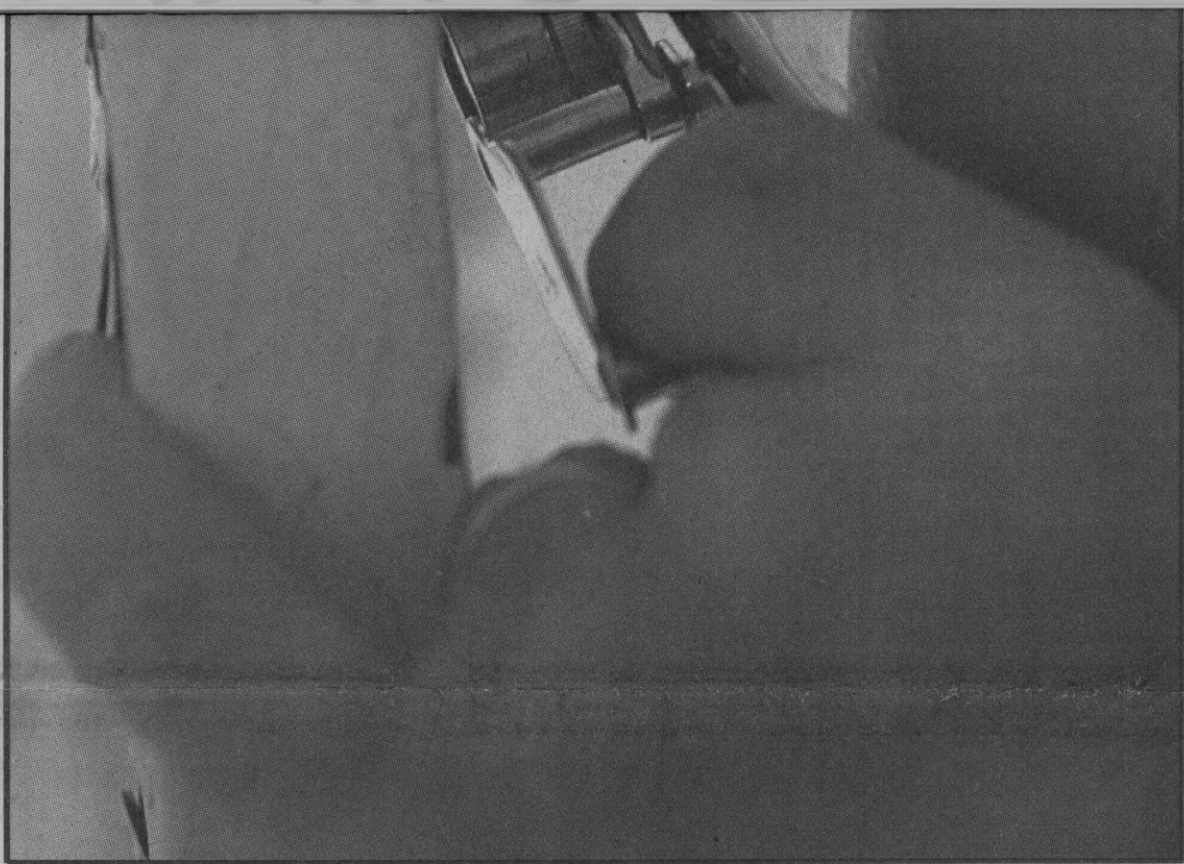
The interior window frames,
which slant outward to emit
the most light, are apparently
original, as is much of the
molding. One door molding
uniquely resembles a
bull's-eye, and is complemen-
ted by fluted casings descend-
ing to the floor.

Benjamin Tasker Chinn
built the manor house in
1837. The great-grandson of
Robert "King" Carter, Chinn
was what one could consider
"old money" in the then-young
republic. The home, likely
built by slaves, is of a design
that is neither colonial nor
federal, and preceded the Vic-
torian era.

Gilpin pointed out second-
floor supports, made of chest-
nut, some hand-hewn with
muscle, sweat and an aze,
others cut with a pit saw. In
the attic, a team member
found beneath the roof sup-
ports and joists what appears
to be an original, handmade
chestnut shingle. In an addi-
tion, they uncovered evidence
of a fire that started between
walls due to an overheated
stovepipe. A single, charred
beam apparently stopped the
flames from going up into the
attic.

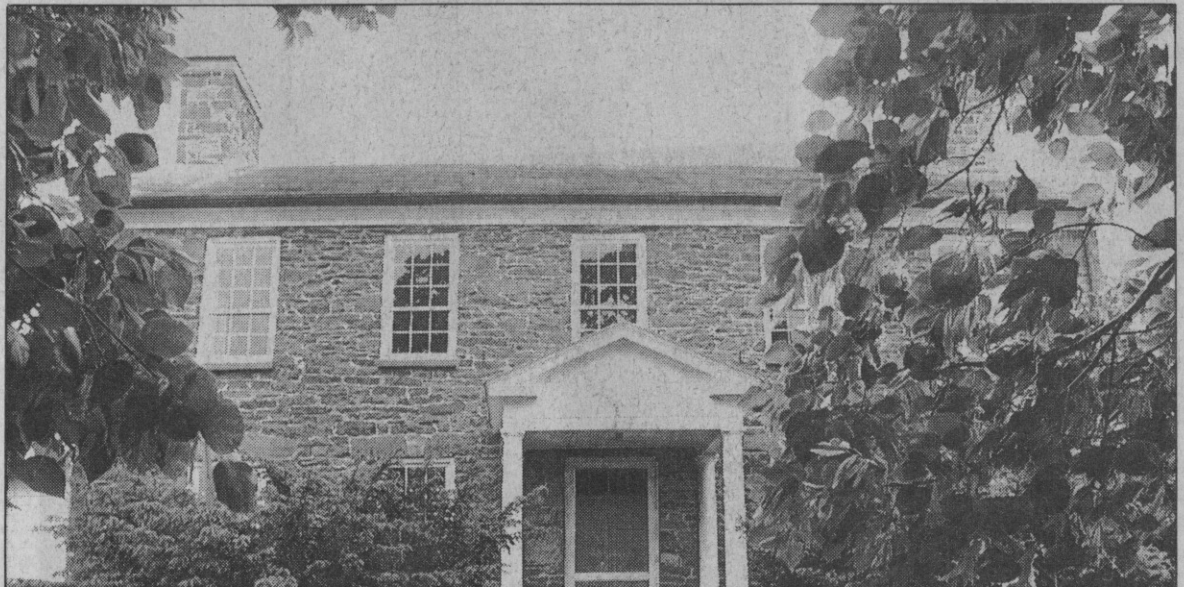
Five years after the Civil
War, the Chinns traded the
estate for land in Washington,
D.C. It went through eight
more owners until being sold
to a developer in the 1960s.
Ridge Development Corp. later
donated the manor to the
county as a historic site.

The Prince William Park Au-
thority now owns the struc-
ture, which is listed on the



Photos by Chris Moorhead-Staff Photographer

During the restoration of the Ben Lomond Manor house, Andrew L. Ladygo examines the surface of a door from which he removed a layer of paint.



t upwards of \$250,000.
 The commission intends to use the architects' plans to launch a fund-raising effort in September. "You have to tell people what you're raising money for," explained Martha Hendley, a commission member.

Hendley visited the home as the architects did their things, engaging their intellectual curiosities and professional talents. One woman, using a scalpel, scraped through the tight layers of paint on the outside door that now looks out on the playing fields beside Sinclair Elementary

D.C. It went through eight more owners until being sold to a developer in the 1960s. Ridge Development Corp. later donated the manor to the county as a historic site.

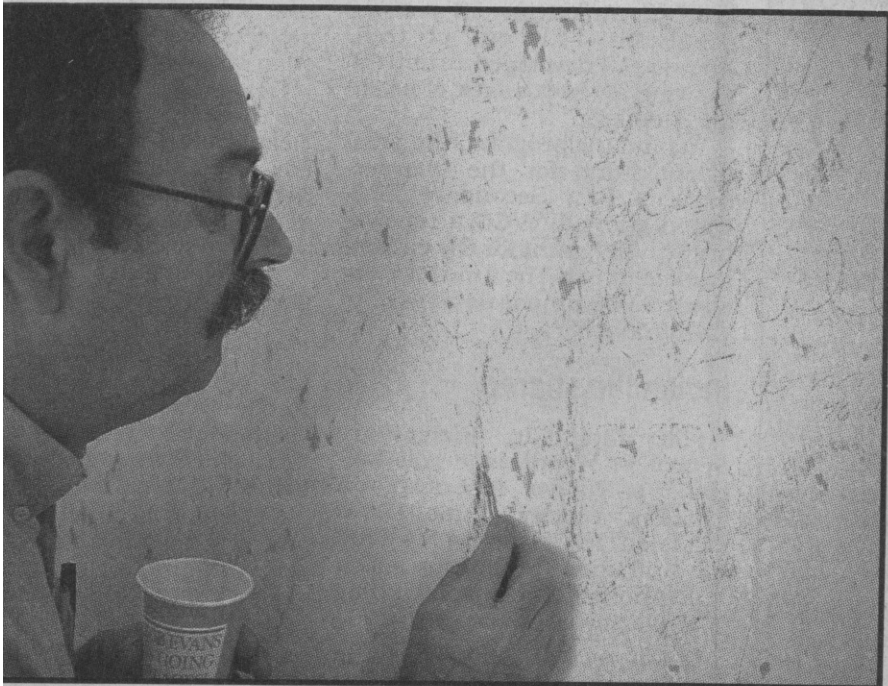
The Prince William Park Authority now owns the structure, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Register of Historic Landmarks.

Aside from being a bit player in Civil War history, the home played a role in the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt. His personal physician and the

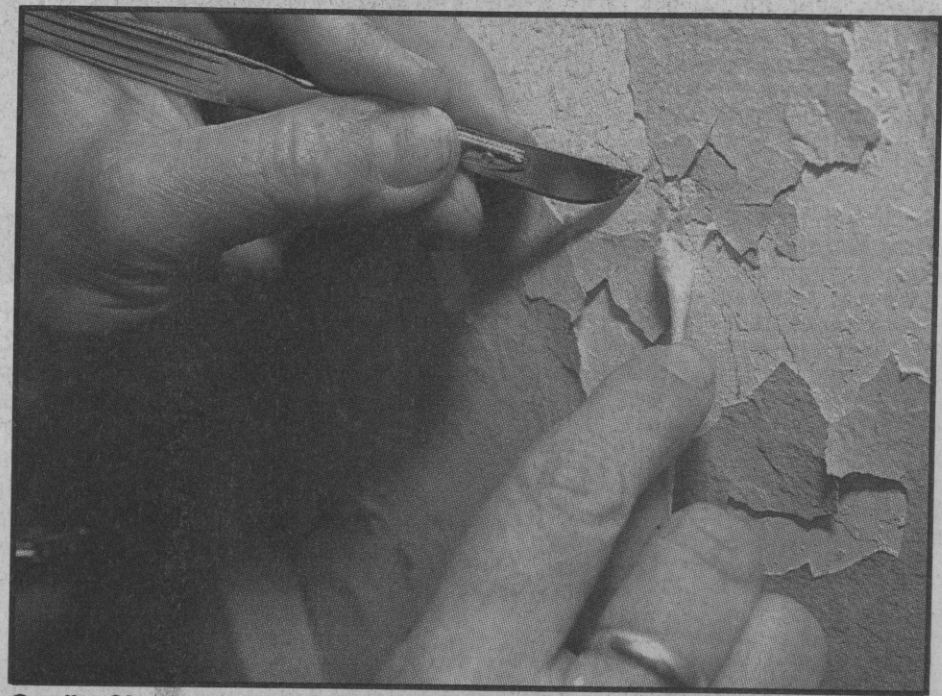
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Shown here is the front of the Ben Lomond Manor house, now undergoing restoration.



Dygo uses a painters' brush and water to reveal graffiti left by Union troops during the Civil War.



Cecile Clover uses a scalpel and Q-tip to remove layers of paint to reveal a picture.

... cows, heard the noise of the sign.
 ... nearby battles of Manassas. From such details, ex-

BEN LOMOND

Restoration begins

LOMOND From Page E1

surgeon general of the Navy, Dr. P.M. Rixey, lived there and hosted the president on his way to and from a country retreat near Charlottesville.

But that's the past. Now the former estate looks out on busy Sudley Manor Road on one side, and the school on the other. A church is next door and the ugly backside of one of those cookie-cutter shopping centers that line Sudley Road is not far away.

The Ben Lomond Community Center is just down the street, however, and the architects and commission members see a linkage.

"The general trend is toward a community use," Gilpin said. "It is quite unique."



SPORTS

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