

LOCAL



By Robert J. Stewart-Potomac News

Spectators and speakers gather at the Conner House in Manassas Park Wednesday evening to hear about plans for restoration of the home which served as a Civil War hospital.

Fund drive begins to restore historic Manassas Park home

By CHRISTINE RIEDEL
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MANASSAS PARK — A group in charge of renovating the city's only historic building kicked off a fund-raiser Wednesday for the project.

The Conner House Historical Society, formed late last year by the Manassas Park City Council, hopes area residents and businesses will donate \$125,000 to repair the house, which served as a hospital and military headquarters during the Civil War. Society members held a ceremony Wednesday evening to unveil a sign announcing the project.

The group is planning to finish repairs on the old farm house and open it to visitors during 1993, said Manassas Park building official Fred Wharton.

"We're going to attempt to have it visitor-ready in two years, but it all depends on fund raising," Wharton said.

The Conner House, which has also been called Blooms Farm, sits near the intersection of Euclid Avenue and Conner Drive. It bears the name of E.R. Conner, a former owner who served on the Manassas Town Council and the General Assembly.

During the Civil War, the house was a hospital for Union and Confederate soldiers. In the summer of 1861, a Union general had his headquarters there. In peacetime, the house was part of a dairy farm.

The most current estimates place the restoration's price at \$250,000. The historical society will apply for grants to match local donations, Wharton said.

So far, the project has drawn \$1,200 in donations, including one from E.R. Conner Jr., a Catharpin resident whose family once owned the property.

The 15-member historical society is targeting businesses for \$75,000 in donations and individuals for \$15,000. Special events, such as telethons, races and re-enactments are being planned to raise the remaining \$35,000, Wharton said.

Work has already begun. Architecture students from Northern Virginia Community College are photographing the property and will draw up repair and landscaping designs.

The first priority is repairing the roof and plugging gaps in the 18-inch-thick sandstone walls, Wharton said.