

The Journal Messenger

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Connor House

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women can raise \$400,000," she said. "We are just plodding along."

Lois Steele, club recording secretary, said that at the rate the local organization is going to raise money, "we won't see the house restored in our lifetime."

Mildred Raistrick, the club's historian, agreed that the restoration work would cost "a fortune ... more than what we can raise." To have an expert come out and evaluate the Connor House for its historical significance would cost as much as \$50,000, she said.

If the members of the club do not continue with their fundraising efforts, she said the project will "fall apart."

"It depends on people to keep it going," she said. "I think we could do something to preserve the house for people to visit."

According to Parks and Recreation Director William Malcolm, the city has submitted grants for restoration of the Connor House over the years but no grants have been awarded. The house is listed on the Virginia and national historic registers.

The Connor House was built prior to 1843, possibly as early as 1820. The red quarry stone used in the original structure and the first addition was taken from the quarry just north of the house in what is known as Bloomingrove. The rafters and timbers are hand-hewn.

Blooms Crossing, a well-known railroad dairy stop in the late 1800s, is near the property and was used by early owners of the Connor House for shipping dairy products to Washington.

A stone addition was completed in 1855. The cornerstone, dated 1855, was removed from the addition and given to the Manassas Museum. A second addition was constructed of wood in 1900 when E. R. Connor took title to the house and some 79 acres of land and turned it into one of the leading dairy farms in the area. None of this structure stands today, according to historical records.

The house sits on a hill overlooking Bull Run and Signal Hill Park, both Civil War landmarks. The significance of the house was unknown for many years until the discovery of George C. Round's papers in the correspondence of Confederate Gen. Joseph Johnson. The correspondence and the 1860 census data for Tudor Hall both conclude that the structure in Manassas Park was what Johnson referred to as the Duncan House, which he used as headquarters for the Confederate Army from September 1861 to January 1862.

In early 1976, Manassas Park officials began discussing demolishing the Connor House because it was becoming unsafe due to the building's close proximity to New Dominion School.

On Sept. 7, 1976, the Manassas Park City Council gave the woman's club five weeks to fence in the property around the Connor House. The council provided \$500 towards the purchase of the fence.

Citizen volunteers, women's club

members and members from Explorer Scout Post 1371 cleaned up and removed the deteriorating wooden structure. The volunteers and scouts worked in the afternoon. The city provided equipment in the evenings to haul away the debris.

The woman's club contracted to have the fence installed and paid for it with city funds and outside donations. On Oct. 19, 1976, a club representative told the council that the fencing was completed and that the building was cleaned and boarded up. At that same meeting, the council voted to permit the club to continue work on the Connor House.

In addition to the fencing, the woman's club financed the several repairs of the Connor House, including spreading weed killer twice, installing a tin roof and painting the roof.

At the same time, the club spend \$700 to install plexiglass windows at the Connor House.

Over the years, the woman's club has had held bake sales and other activities to raise money for the restoration of the house. The recycling center is an ongoing pro-

ject.

The recycling center had been originally housed in the old barn on the Connor property. The barn burned down in the late 1970s and recycling center was behind Manassas Park Police Station.

Newspapers and aluminum cans from area residents are received at the recycling center. The newspaper are picked up by a recycling company during the summer each year. Club members dispose of aluminum cans when there is a large supply. Proceeds from recycling of the materials is placed in the Connor House Fund.

For the last 12 years, Embrey's the woman's club has been looking for someone to replace the mortar behind the stone in the Connor House.

"The mortar is crumbling; it needs to be replaced," she said.

Embrey said the club will continue to raise funds toward restoring the Connor House and hope that city eventually receives a grant "from somewhere" for the restoration of the house. The recycling center is an ongoing pro-

"It would be a beautiful house once it is restored," she said.



Michael Dersin—The Journal Messenger

Closer Look

The exterior of the Connor House has deteriorated considerably over the years since the city purchased the property in 1973.

Grants Wanted For MP House

PwC - HISTORIC SITES

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By MARGO TURNER
JM Staff Writer

Raising funds to restore the Connor House, the only structure standing in Manassas Park with historical value, has been a slow process for local residents who feel the state should take the initiative in providing the necessary money.

Since 1978, when the Manassas Park Woman's Center began a recycling center as its sole fundraising project for the Connor House restoration, \$4,500 has been collected. That does not come anywhere close to paying the cost of refurbishing the deteriorating building, according to Councilwoman Frances Embrey, president of the woman's club.

"We all love that house, but no one has the money to spend on it," Embrey said. "We hope the city can receive a state grant for restoration of the house."

The restoration of the Connor House is part of a comprehensive plan in Manassas Park which would include the total development of Signal Hill Park, which the city owns.

In 1976, the woman's club took over the responsibility of the Connor

House, which the city had purchased along with the surrounding land three years before. At that time, Embrey said it was estimated the restoration costs would be \$200,000. Because of the constant deterioration of the building and the price of construction, the amount would be as much as \$400,000 today, she said.

"There is no way a group of 18 See Connor House on A-2.

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