



Conner house at turn of the century and today, upper right

Conner family photo

## CONNER

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northeast of Manassas or between there and Bull Run: "Messrs. McLean, Wilcoxon, Kincheole and Brawner, citizens of this immediate vicinity, it is their due to say, have placed me and the country under great obligations for the information relative to this region, which has enabled me to avail myself of its defensive features and resources." Beauregard was staying at Liberia, then the William J. Weir mansion, at the time of his report to the Confederate president.

Myra Kittrell, Manassas

Park Woman's Club project chairman, said the house was built of products of the land immediately around it. Red stone came from the Bloominggrove quarry nearby for the older portion of the house, built about 1820. A cornerstone on a newer stone section bears the date 1855. The final, wooden addition was constructed in 1900 but has been torn down, said Mrs. Kittrell.

The house was the home of the late Mr. and Mrs. E. R. Conner and their son, E. R. Conner III, curator of the Manassas Museum, inherited

the property, known as Bloom's Farm since the early 1900s, in 1960. The largest part of the original, 78-acre farm was bought by the Prince William County School Board after 1971 while the house and yard were sold to the City of Manassas Park, according to an article Conner wrote for "Echoes of History" in October 1976.

The first step in salvaging the house was fencing out vandals, said Mrs. Kittrell. In 1976 City Council gave the women \$500 for chain link fencing. With the help of the Manassas Park Explorer

post, the club and other volunteers cleared the area around the house, boarded the openings and had the fence erected.

Last November, Alfred Davis—one of few men who know how to repair a tin roof, according to Mrs. Kittrell—donated his time to patch the Conner house roof. Mayor Frank Murphy and councilman Gene Murphy gave time and materials to close in areas that had left the inside exposed to the weather.

The project chairman said the house is "in the process" of being put on the national

register of historic houses.

She also produced a copy of a letter, dated Sept. 18, 1976, from Calder Loth, senior architectural historian of the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, to Roger J. Costello, then mayor of Manassas Park:

"...This building (the Conner house) is architecturally interesting as an example of an indigenous dwelling-type and has associations with Civil War history...it stands as an important reminder of the deep roots of your community. I hope that the city will treat this house sympathetically and cooperate with the local groups seeking its preservation. Historic landmarks are important to a community's identity and cultural enrichment. I hope the Conner House can be looked on as a valuable asset rather than a liability."

Mrs. Kittrell said the restoration would cost about \$100,000. She said the club started with only \$200 in its coffers but has raised funds through club projects such as the kickoff dinner in October and a December bake sale that netted \$69.43.

Mrs. Kittrell can be reached at 368-4385 for information about the current fund-raiser.

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GMN photo by Merrie E. Spor

## Old house is out of sync

By MERRIE E. SPOR

The historic Conner house just outside the city limits of Manassas Park seems to be an anachronism, perched as it is on what's left of a hill next to New Dominion School parking lot.

The quarry stone house, which predates the Civil War, is out of sync with the neighboring school, nearby Osbourn Park High School and wide, paved streets. No sound of life comes from the deteriorating structure except wind whistling through exposed hand-hewn rafters.

It was in danger of demolition until recently. The city of Manassas Park, which bought the property in 1973, ruled the house a safety hazard because of its proximity to New Dominion, then Didlake School.

Because of the connection with Civil War history—there were Confederate encampments on the property—the Manassas Park Woman's Club has tackled restoring the house.

According to Civil War military reports, part of the battalion led by Maj. John B. Walton, Washington Artillery, was ordered to the "farm house on the hill" on July 17, 1861. Gen. G. T. Beauregard wrote from Manassas on the same date to Jefferson Davis, mentioning citizens living



GMN photo by Merrie E. Spor

Historic Conner house is in disrepair

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