

New roof gives Cobb-McCormick House in Haymarket an "old" look

By JENNIFER HEYNS
Observer staff

There is only one residence in the Town of Haymarket that has been standing since before the Civil War and it recently got a new roof.

The McCormick House, which is owned by Elizabeth Cobb, is located on Fayette Street next to St. Paul's Parish Hall. Cobb said she replaced the roof hoping to make it look more like it did nearly 200 years ago.

When Cobb bought the house in 1963, the pine-shingled roof that its previous owner put on was in much need of repair. Cobb wanted the house to look as original as possible, but not knowing what the original roof was made of she had a cedar shingle roof put on.

Unfortunately, by 1980, the roof needed to be replaced again.

"I hated to do it, but I had a regular fiber-glass shingle roof put on. I hadn't renovated the inside yet and I just wanted something that I knew would stop leaks from coming in and ruining what was left," said Cobb.

She remembers neighbors who commented on the horrible roof she had chosen and how it didn't fit with the time period the house had been built in.

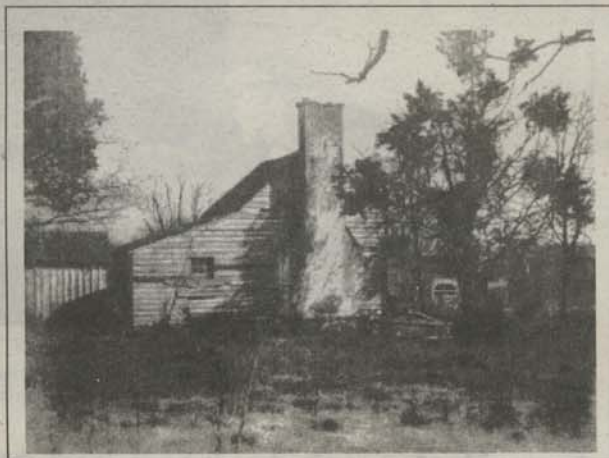
Cobb said she always enjoyed

exploring old abandoned houses with her sister and owns several books containing information about the oldest buildings in this area and studies them, visits those she can and remembers quite a few of them that are no longer in existence. Her own house is listed in a few of these books and is even on record in the Library of Congress. Cobb obtained a photo of the house from the Library of Congress.

before any of the renovations or additions were made to it.

"Barnett later sold the house to another shoemaker, Thomas McCormick," said Linda Landwehr, vice chair of the Haymarket Historical Commission. The 1860 and 1870 censuses both list the house on Fayette Street as belonging to the McCormick family.

Several people have owned the McCormick House since, but



Library of Congress photo shows how the house used to look

A shoemaker named John Barnett built the house, a log cabin on a stone foundation, around 1800. The photo shows the house

none of them used it as a primary residence and its condition deteriorated.

In the 1950s the house was sold in a tax sale. The purchaser was Walter Macomber.

"Mr. Macomber was a resident architect at Mount Vernon," said Cobb. Cobb said that she found references to Macomber in some of her books and that he was apparently known for purchasing historical buildings and restoring them.

During his restoration of the



View of the Cobb/McCormick House to match view of house in photo from Library of Congress
Jennifer Heyns / The Bull Run Observer

McCormick house, Macomber brought pine shingles from the coach house at Mount Vernon and used them for the roof.

Macomber never resided in the house, he only rented it out, she said.

"One winter, the house was unoccupied," said Cobb, "so Macomber asked a friend of his to find someone to stay in the house for the cold season. Either that person neglected the house terribly or it had begun to deteriorate before then and Macomber wasn't aware" but the house was in dire need of repair after that winter.

Macomber did not fix up the house again; instead he put the McCormick house on the market in 1963 and Cobb obtained it.

It is difficult to tell from the old photo, but it looks as if the steepest part of the roof was originally made of standing-seam tin.

With the interest rates so low now, Cobb decided to refinance last year and said she was thrilled to find that the new interest rates gave her enough financial leeway to afford to put another roof on the house; a roof that would be more fitting for such a historical monument in the historic town.

Cobb found contractor Dave Loving and hired him to put an authentic standing seam tin roof on her house similar to what is believed to have been the original roof.

Loving and his crew "took approximately 10 days to get the old roof off and put up the new," said Cobb. The work isn't done yet though. The roof still has to be painted, but the painting cannot be done until the weather gets warmer. Come spring, the roof will be painted black.

Much of the house has been renovated, but there are still tell-tale signs of what it used to be. Standing on either side of the exterior walls, large logs can be seen, although they have been painted over several times. The crawl space under the house once served as the kitchen as is indicated by the hearth and springs that pop up from time to time causing minor flooding.

Originally the house had only three rooms, one stacked above the other. The kitchen was accessible only from outside the home. The living room took up the entire first floor and the bedroom was above it.

Today the former kitchen houses only ductwork and utility equipment. The living room is still where it always has been, but a kitchen, guestroom and dining room have been added. The bedroom above the living room is still the same.

There is a plaque on the outside of the building, officially naming it the McCormick House, by the Haymarket Historical Commission.

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