

Mansion House work to start in June

By ANN CONY

Plans to restore the Mansion House are moving ahead at full steam, with construction scheduled to begin in June.

Besides restoring and remodeling the downtown structure, Roger Hoffman says he and his brother Jeff also plan to build a new building behind the Mansion House to accommodate shops, possibly those which will be displaced by the renovation.

Hoffman said Thursday that the prospects for a first-class restaurant moving into the ground floor of the Mansion House are excellent. He said negotiations are in progress with three or four established restaurateurs who are interested in the site.

Jack's Cigar store, Ye Olde Bead Shoppe and La Fondita Cafe received notice Wednesday that they must vacate the ground floor of the Mansion House by May 1, when preliminary work for the remodeling will begin.

"If we want a restaurant of the caliber we're looking for, they want every square inch of space they can get," Hoffman said in explaining why the shopowners will be evicted. The floor space now occupied by the three small businesses covers some 5,000 square feet, he said.

Restoration plans for the Mansion House, long in the works, took on concrete proportions Wednesday with the official formation of two limited partnerships to be headed by the Hoffman brothers.

The Hoffmans and other local investors raised \$400,000 to fund restoration and management of the historic structure.

The Hoffmans will serve as general partners for both Plaza Properties and Mansion House Developers. Some 15 other individuals have invested as limited partners, liable only for their initial investments.

Hoffman was nothing short of ecstatic Thursday about closing the deal. "The local community supported it and then they put their money where their mouth was," he said.



The businesses on the bottom floor of Mansion House will have to move.

Plaza Properties will buy the land the Mansion House sits on and then lease the land to Mansion House Developers. Mansion House Developers will then buy the building and fund the restoration work, managing the operation once remodeling is complete.

The Hoffmans will have control over both partnerships. Two rather than one were established to "provide a tremendous tax shelter" made possible by the 1976 Historic Preservation Tax Law, Roger Hoffman said.

If restoration and remodeling proceed on schedule, the building should be ready for occupancy Jan. 1.

"The exterior will be completely rehabilitated and restored to its 1871 motif," said Hoffman. The interior will be stripped to the studs and the spaces redesigned. The architectural molding will be removed before the plaster walls are stripped and put back later.

An elevator and lobby will be added on the ground floor, in the general area now occupied by the La Fondita Cafe. The second and third floors of the building will be remodeled to serve as business offices.

Hoffman said plans to build a new building behind the Mansion House were prompted by the need to evict Jack's Cigar Store and the other businesses.

The site visualized for the new building is now occupied by three small structures — a brick building, a concrete building and a tin storage shed. All are either vacant now or being used only for storage, according to Hoffman. They would be demolished to make room for a new building of about 2,000 square feet and the three displaced shops would have first crack at leasing space there.

Hoffman said he and his brother have offered to move Jack's store, preserving its wood paneling and cabinetry, to the new building "at no cost to him."