



Dala Bruemmer/Register-Pajaronian

The 4,000-square-foot Redman House was built in 1897 for James Redman, a local farmer. Designed by architect William H. Weeks, the house, just off Highway 1, has been sitting empty for years.

# Reviving the Redman House

*Historic House - Santa County* *R.P. 1.12.02*  
 Restoration project gears up for full-fledged fund-raising effort

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No doubt you've noticed it as you hurtled past on Highway 1 and wondered about its past. Maybe you spotted the huge "Help Save This Old House" banner that used to hang from second story, or the sign now posted on the corner of Lee Road and West Beach Street.

Abandoned, vandalized and in need of extensive renovation, the 103-year-old Redman House now stands as a forlorn memorial to brighter days. What was once a showpiece of craftsmanship and modernity has

been slowly deteriorating for more than a decade as local interests tried to figure out what to do with the peeling, graying remains of the once-magnificent home.

A small, local non-profit group will draw one step closer to its goal of restoring the house this week, as they release a business plan outlining their plans to transform Redman House into a self-sustaining center of historical information and tourism resources.

The 4,000-square-foot estate house was built in 1897 for James Redman, a local farmer. Designed by architect William H. Weeks

and finished with details like leaded glass and birdseye maple woodwork, it was for many years a proud monument to the craftsmanship of its era and the prosperity of the growers who settled here in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The Redmans occupied the house until the 1930s, when the family line died out. The house and land were then sold to the Hirahara family, who maintained ownership even through their interment during World War II and returned to live on the property for 40 more years after the war's end. They sold the house and lands to Green Farm, an investment partner-

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ship, but continued to occupy the house until the Loma Prieta earthquake struck in 1989.

Recognizing the value of the property's proximity to Highway 1, Green Farm had hoped to develop the land. Local government proved inhospitable to that prospect, however, as well as to proposals to relocate the house.

Meanwhile, the house stood vacant, neglected and vandalized, while the land has remained in production as a strawberry field.

In 1998, a group of local citizens banded together to try to save the house. Since becoming a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization in 1999, the Redman House Foundation has worked with to secure ownership of the house, raise funds for its restoration, and develop a use for it that will benefit the local economy and keep the land in production.

"After four years, it's still that the house hasn't been saved yet. But we're getting closer," John Skinner, chairman of the Redman House Foundation, told the Register-Pajaronian this week.

The foundation has acquired an option to purchase the entire 14-acre parcel for a cost of \$2.4 million. In the past year it has also made progress toward getting Redman House added to the National Historic Register.

This week, the Redman House Foundation is slated to finalize a comprehensive business plan for the project. The move will enable the group to begin soliciting financial support for what looks to be at least a five-year undertaking that will include three years of phased restoration and construction.

"Our primary objective is to

save the house and make it accessible to people, and to give it an economic value so it can produce funds for its own maintenance," explained Skinner. "We wanted to preserve the original flavor of it and also attract people."

The foundation envisions the prominent location as a self-sustaining wine-tasting/visitor center that would draw travelers off the highway to spend their time and money in the Pajaro Valley area by introducing them to local vintages and the Pajaro Valley region's agricultural, environmental and historical bounty.

They hope to recreate an 1890s farmstead on the property, restoring the house to its original grandeur and creating a Victorian-style flower garden and a research and demonstration farm on the 14 surrounding acres. The foundation hopes to eventually construct a conference building at the site, as well, to provide Pajaro Valley residents with another optional location for meetings or special events. The total cost of acquiring the property and making the improvements is estimated to be about \$7 million.

"Politically there are no more obstacles to (the plan)," said Skinner, who credits Assemblyman Fred Keeley for helping clear much of the way for the project. But, Skinner noted, "Nothing starts until we get money. We haven't been overrun with funds, but once we get a solid business plan up we believe that will be resolved."

"We will get support from local businesses," says Skinner. "I think to them it's an investment in the community, and I think they'll be happy to get behind us."

The foundation also hopes to approach local foundations for possible grants, and is talking with the State of California about poten-

tial funding from state park and highway beautification coffers.

Meanwhile, the Redman House Foundation welcomes further support from the general public. The foundation has already accumulated a database listing of more than 400 people who have expressed support for restoring the old house on Lee Road. As they look toward what they anticipate will be a two-year fund-raising effort, they're confident that list will continue to expand and enthusiasm for the project will increase.

"We know that once we get everything in place we'll have tremendous public support," says Skinner.

Those interested in contributing financially are invited to take part in Redman House's second annual Fundraiser Dinner on Tuesday, February 19 at Shadowbrook restaurant in Capitola. For anyone who mentions Redman House when making a reservation for their party of any size to dine at the restaurant that evening, Shadowbrook will contribute 33 percent of the tab back to the nonprofit foundation.

"Last year was very successful," said Ted Burke, the restaurant's owner. "The best part is, it's not rubber chicken. You can order what you want, and hopefully since it's going toward charity, people will order a little more than they would usually."

Burke says he's happy to support the local effort this way.

"I think it's a great place to save," he said. "I personally know a couple of the people involved in the effort, and I'm impressed with their dedication. I know that with their talent and commitment, it will end up coming to fruition."

For more information about the effort to preserve Redman House, visit [www.redmanhouse.org](http://www.redmanhouse.org), or contact the Redman House Foundation by telephone at 722-3476.