

Historic Redman House will sit on new foundation as part of renovation

Historic Houses - South County
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SENTINEL CORRESPONDENT

When one thinks of antiquated mansions, visions of Georgian estates complete with sprawling porches and luxurious lawns come to mind, not the ramshackle house with drooping porches and crumbling paint on Lee Road.

The house, known as the Redman House, is the focus of an ongoing renovation project.

Geoff Scurfield, a Watsonville contractor, undertook the project 10 years ago when he decided the house was disappearing before his eyes. At the time, Green Farms owned the property and considered leasing it out as commercial property. Scurfield felt compelled to restore the historical monument before it was turned into another strip mall.

Scurfield encouraged many other community members to join him in his mission. Dean Coley took it to heart and is contributing his time and resources to the project. Coley, an architect and wood artisan, joined the efforts five years ago.

"This is recognized by the Department of the Interior as a historical monument,

The Redman House

WHAT: A historic house that is part of the Pajaro Valley historical landscape.

WHERE: On Lee Road, just off Highway 1 and Riverside Drive.

WHY: The land is filled with history, including that of the Hirahara family, who bought the land in the 1930s and were subsequently forced to abandon it after they were imprisoned in internment camps following the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941.

INFORMATION: www.redmanhouse.com or 421-1392.

TO DONATE: Contact Web site or mail to Friends of Redman House, P.O. Box 2526, Watsonville, CA 95077.

so we wanted to show that to the community," Coley said. "Our hope is to incorporate aspects of the community into this project, because that is who should benefit from this."

William H. Weeks designed the house and saw its construction through to its final stages in 1897. Among other things, Weeks is known for designing the casino at the Boardwalk and is responsible



Kate Falconer/Sentinel

Dean Coley, co-chair of the Redman House Foundation board of directors, stands next to the Victorian, which was built in 1897. The house will be lifted in July so crews can begin work on the foundation.

for designing more than 91 homes in the Pajaro Valley alone.

The original owner of the home, James Redman, commissioned Weeks to design a home of grandeur to match the rich agricultural landscape. Redman, a farmer, planted apples, lettuce and sugar beets on the surrounding acres. In 1902, he sold more than 15 tons of sugar beets to distributors in San Francisco.

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In November 2004, the Redman Foundation earned its nonprofit status and three months later bought the property.

"We realize that it is a slow process but we have control and we have good support from the county and Planning Commission," Coley said. "Right now, we are running it through the Coastal Commission and trying to get the political muscle we need."

The estimated cost for the renovation is \$4.2 million, including a new foundation, which will begin in the next six weeks. The group hopes to have the house back on its new foundation before winter.

The Redman Foundation also wants to ensure that the renovation expands beyond the house and onto the rest of the 14 acres that comprise the property. There are plans for a sunken courtyard, a gazebo for live music, a demonstration barn and a wine cellar.

Coley and Spurfield believe the key to bringing in more funds is making people aware of what is going on at the farm.

"Most people take a look at this old house and think, 'Why would I want to save it? It's not mine.' We have to make people realize that this is part of the community," Coley said.

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