

Rispin Mansion garden cleanup planned



Dan Coyro/Sentinel file

A volunteer clears brush during a Rispin Mansion cleanup in 1986.

By **DONNA KIMURA**
Sentinel staff writer

CAPITOLA — Volunteers want to breathe new life into the old gardens of the city's dilapidated Rispin Mansion.

- Pull tree stumps.
- Clear debris.
- Plant trees.

Recapture some magic from 70 years ago.

Members of the Rispin Mansion Advisory Committee have made their "to do" list and are ready to roll up their sleeves, according to organizers.

Several committee members visited the site last month to inspect the grounds.

"It was like 'The Secret Garden,' " said Barbara Bernie, who is involved in the effort. "It was really exciting."

For eight years, Bernie has thought about restoring the estate's landscaping.

When she was a student in the UC Santa Cruz landscape architecture program, she designed a plan to renovate the mansion property.

Photographs of the Rispin property in its heyday will serve as a guide in the restoration.

Now, it looks like the pieces are falling in place.

One of the first steps for the committee will be to approach the City Council this month to ask that an old wood building on the site be demolished, she said.

The building apparently was built after the St. James Monastery of Poor Clares religious order moved to the site in 1946.

Once the auxiliary building is gone, volunteers can begin restoring the

grounds surrounding the 22-room mansion. Built on Wharf Road, the home was constructed for the wealthy Rispin family in 1922.

Bernie said she has photographs of the property in its heyday to serve as a guide in the restoration.

The home later became a monastery, and the nuns were its last inhabitants. For the past seven years, it has been owned by the city.

Residents recently stepped up their efforts to rehabilitate the property as Capitola celebrates its 125th anniversary this year.

Officials have talked about restoring the mansion so it can house the city museum and serve as a community meeting place.

The Rispin Mansion Advisory Committee invites people to attend its regular meetings at 5:30 p.m. on the first and third Tuesdays each month in the Community Room at City Hall.

REFERENCE

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