

National registry protects many mansions from the wrecking ball

(Continued from E 1)

Tucker, but basically the building is vacant. Some gradual remodeling and renovations are being done, she said.

Last May the home was made available to the Woodinville Historical Society for a designer showcase and some work was done on the interior.

Stimson, a lumber magnate and brother of C.D. Stimson, began Hollywood Farm in 1910 as a model to demonstrate the commercial feasibility of the west dairy advances. It was fashionable for the wealthy to own summer-home farms in those days.

The Stimson farm became a highly successful project and in 1918 the Stimsons moved there permanently. The farmhouse with its carriage house and caretaker's cottage are little changed from when the Stimsons lived there.

Marymoor Farm in Redmond, a mansion and a farm estate owned by James W. Clise, financier, in the first decade of the century, has housed the Marymoor Museum since 1908. It also is home for an arts and crafts center. The 28-room country mansion originally was a hunting lodge near Clise's water-fowl preserve.

Skolnik says each mansion has to stand on its own merits in order to be preserved.

"If it is in private ownership and the owner is sensitive, there is a good chance it will be maintained. If the owner is interested just in speculation on the land, has no interest in restoration, the building usually is left to deteriorate."

The major concerns about old buildings are the costs of restoration and the operating expenses, Skolnik said. Mansions are a liability now. They are too big and

require too much care.

One way in which a mansion can be considered an asset is through a donation, much like the tax advantage enjoyed by people who buy art and donate it to a museum. A donation can be a tax write-off, Skolnik said.

Skolnik draws a fine line between the restoration and rehabilitation of an historic building. Restoration returns it to what it was, he says, while rehabilitation makes it habitable, or usable by complying with building codes that didn't exist when it was built.

Rehabilitation can be complex, especially when the building must conform to a variety of present codes.

"The laws may say restore and preserve, but when you overlay this with codes, you are in conflict." As an example, he said, when the Stimson-Green Mansion in Seattle needed a new roof, it was decided that the original plan would be followed with wood shingling replacing asphalt.

But the use of a wood roof was restricted in that part of the city and a running battle developed with the Fire Department until a compromise could be reached.

The Green Mansion has had only five owners since it was completed in 1901 by C.D. Stimson, early-day lumber tycoon. The Stimsons lived there until 1914, when Joshua Green, then in the steamship business, bought it, and Green and his wife, Missy, lived in the house until their deaths in 1975.

The Historic Seattle Preservation and Development Authority bought it from the Greens' estate for \$187,000 to save it from demolition. The house now carries covenants protecting it from demolition.

Cleveland & Associates, a

Seattle advertising firm, acquired the mansion last spring for \$740,000 and books catered weddings and receptions with conducted tours for groups during the week. Weekend functions at the mansion are booked through March. Other possibilities include booking small business conferences.

Cleveland & Associates, which has offices in a carriage house behind the mansion, estimates it will take four or five years to bring the building to the condition desired.

Auburn's Neely Mansion is undergoing a face-lift intended to give it a "new" look of the 1890s. But its future "is very uncertain," according to Mrs. Don Craig of the Auburn Arts Council, which purchased the 37-year-old house and deeded it to the county for a short-plot 30-year lease two years ago.

Government funding for the renovation project is running out and the county has requested that the building be given over to commercial development, but the Arts Council opposes that idea, she said.

In very poor condition when it was acquired by the council, the building since has been rejuvenated so that it will not deteriorate further, Mrs. Craig said. About \$80,000 has gone into the project primarily involving state and county grants which were used to raise and level the building, install a new foundation and sidewalks, roof and chimney, and for architects fees.

The council's intent was to bring the building to its original state, but with funds virtually exhausted, the building may remain as is, Mrs. Craig said. With the county pressing for its commercial use, "if we are going to finish it, we will have to have some agreement with business enterprises on finishing the interi-

or. The main thing we want is to have it accessible to the public."

Because of its classically ornate style, the Neely Mansion was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

More than 100,000, and at least twice that many volunteer hours have gone into restoring the 1890 Meeker Mansion in Puyallup.

Liz Costello, president of the Ezra Meeker Society, said the aged, 17-room mansion was saved from the wrecking ball in 1976 after it had spent its declining years as a nursing home, a home for widows of the Grand Army of the Republic and as a rooming house.

"It was an absolute mess," she said. "But the society managed to buy it, now it's a National Historic Monument and it would take an act of Congress to tear it down."

Except for a \$5,000 grant from the Seattle Foundation and a couple of government-funded temporary workers for one summer, the society has used donated labor, materials and money to refurbish the mansion.

Costello says it will probably take another five years for the society to bring the mansion back to the shape it was in 1890 when Ezra Meeker built it for his bride, Eliza Jane. Most of the rooms have been stripped and painted or wallpapered, walls have been torn down and replaced and broken windows have been fixed. Next on

the list is yanking up yards of vinyl tile so the wood floors underneath can be refinished.

The biggest inside task facing the group is renovating the huge ballroom on the third floor.

The completed parts of the mansion are shown off whenever the society has a chance. Its next formal appearance will be Decem-

ber 4-6 when the finished rooms will be decorated for Christmas.

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