

Neely mansion supporters ready to paint

Members of the Neely Mansion Associates are making preparations to spruce up the historic farm building in Auburn with a new coat of paint.

Work parties have begun cleaning the exterior, using liquid detergents and bleach to get rid of moss, according to Virginia Haugen, head of the 10-member organization.

On the south side of the building the group will have to remove a series of nests made by swallows.

The white paint for the project was donated by Quality Coatings of Seattle. Haugen said longtime residents say the 90-year-old house always has been painted white.

The mansion associates are meeting the \$165 monthly payments on a loan advanced to the previous owners by the Washington Mutual Savings Bank, Haugen said. Work still is being done on obtaining non-profit status for the

group, she added. Once that is achieved, Haugen said, a large corporation plans to donate \$500 for building repair work.

To help recover costs, Haugen said the associates are selling copies of "Neely Mansion History." Involved in writing it were Mary Neely Hardin and Irene Dolan Carver of Seattle, granddaughters of Aaron Neeley Sr., who built the house, and Ruby Neely Soams of Kent, a granddaughter of David Neely, a brother of Aaron.

Besides detailing the history of the house and the family that built and lived in it, the book reviews local history.

The two-story mansion was built beside the Green River by Aaron Neely, who settled in the valley in 1878. He became a leading fruit grower and farmer and the Neely home was noted for parties that drew neighbors and friends from as far as Enumclaw.

After World War II, when members of the Neely family no longer lived there, the structure went into decline and suffered considerable damage from vandalism and neglect.

In 1979, it was acquired by the Auburn Arts Council with a \$10,000 loan from the savings bank. The council subsequently spent over \$110,000 in grant money for restoration work.

When the council became virtually defunct, the associates took over the mansion in order to continue its restoration.

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