First-of-its-kind survey lists 811 historic sites

by Val Varney
Times suburban reporter

After three years, history has finally been mapped out in King County. It's in the form of a first-of-its-kind survey that has charted, photographed, and cataloged 811 historic sites. Most of them are in the south and east part of the county, and they range from homes to firehouses and barns.

The survey, done by the county's Department of Planning and Community Development, was a long time coming and was welcomed in its way through considerable red tape.

In 1973, the county's Environmental Development Commission (now the Policy Development Commission) made recommendations related to historic sites. Three years later, the policies were revised and adopted in an ordinance amending the county's comprehensive plan.

Under the mandates of the ordinance, historic sites designated in the recently completed survey have been protected from further growth by provisions in community plans. Where possible, the sites will be given zoning classifications that are compatible with the site's function and the community's overall development.

The cause of preservation was given a boost two months ago with the establishment of a new commission, the Landmarks Commission, with authority to designate historic sites and, with County Council approval, to prevent unnecessary changes or destruction of the sites surveyed.

Besides the recent survey, the county has also been working on a report which includes projects funded for preservation face-lifting.

Six projects have been selected for funding from a $59,000

The Neely Mansion, a Victorian farmhouse built in 1892 near the Green River in Auburn, has been selected for restoration under a Housing and Community Development block grant.

A total of $35,000 in 1979 grants funds is being held to help finance the purchase of the Sutton Farm in Burton, the last 19th Century farmstead in the Highline area. It comprises the original Victorian farmhouse, an orchard and 5 acres. The county Parks Department has been negotiating a purchase agreement with the owner.

Another combined restoration effort of the county's Office of Historic Preservation and the Parks Department is the Marymoor Museum in Redmond.

Situated in the Chinese Mansion at Marymoor Park, the museum has been operating 10 years. Last year, it was given more space for exhibits and a long-term lease was signed with the county, establishing the museum as a permanent park attraction.

The Marymoor Museum Association has received a grant of $10,000 to set up exhibits and slides for senior centers and the handicapped.

Grants around the mansion, listed in the National Register of Historic Places, were set aside last year to protect historic sites in the county's master plan for the park.

Two other sites, Company House No. 73 in Newcastle and the Hollydorf Farm residence and grounds in Woodinville, have also been accepted in the national register. A third, the Pickering Barn in Issaquah, will be considered for acceptance in August.

The county has also made a $15,000 appropriation for grants of $500 each to 20 historical societies and nonprofit museums in the county, to help buy equipment and improve exhibits.

Last year the county published a guide to historic sites and offers photographic-slide programs to schools and other groups. In trying to consolidate historic public records that originated in King County, negotiations are going on to use the former Swale Junior High School near the Seattle-Tacoma Airpot, a school the Port of Seattle now owns. Such documents have been stored as far away as Bellingham and Ellenburg.

Next month the preservation office will make recommendations for other projects to receive restoration funds.

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