

Bill would restore Green farmhouse on TCNJ campus

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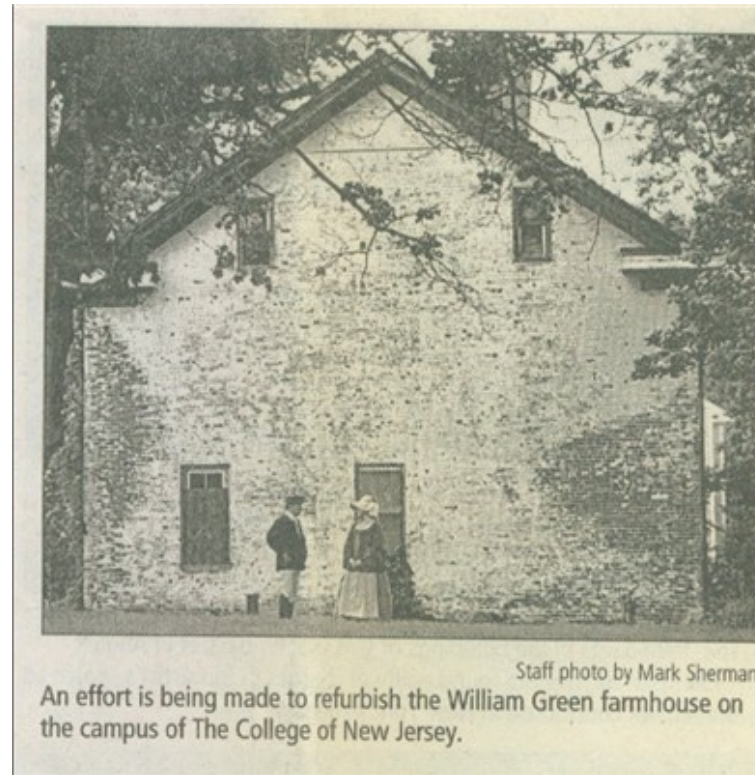
EWING -- The William Green farmhouse for years has been The College of New Jersey's humble outcast.

Surrounded by sprawling brick buildings with rich green lawns and newly planted tulips, the farmhouse barely has been touched in 30 years, although the architectural importance of its Flemish brickwork is noted on both state and national historic places lists.

The house, built in the early 1700s by English farmers from New York, could be getting new life.

A bill sponsored by Assemblyman Reed Gusciora, D-Princeton Borough, would provide \$700,000 to restore the fallen landmark now hidden behind a thick wall of overgrown trees and wild plants along TCNJ's eastern edge.

It will take an extra \$500,000 to make the house a modern version of its former self, but



college officials, Green descendants and local residents yesterday said the bill would be a much-needed beginning.

"The farmhouse as it stands now is lost and in desperate need of repair," said Bill O'Neal, whose wife is a Green. "It needs to be restored to its former glory so we can hopefully enjoy it once again."

It is hard to see at first glance why historic preservation activists have fought to protect the Green house from becoming yet another residence hall or athletic field.

During a walk around the house yesterday, visitors were told not to go inside.

"We're not sure if it will hold up," said Greg Bressler, vice president of facilities at the college.

Spectators noted the house looks unsafe, with plywood boards nailed to windows and the red Flemish bricks turned white from age and neglect.

Besides a roof that was added to the house 10 years ago, TCNJ has not done much to preserve the building because it lacks the \$1.2 million needed to restore the 13-room house, said Gusciora.

"It's a public building, so there's no state grants to fund this," he said.

Mayor Al Bridges, a college vice president, claims to have been at the college long enough to remember when the Green house wasn't covered with dirt.

"I used to come here as a student with a lot more hair on my head and fewer pounds than I have now and we'd all sit around a bonfire before annual homecoming games," said Bridges. "The house has had its ups and downs over the years, but it has enormous potential for this college."

The legacy of the Green house has been carefully recorded over the years in numerous books about Trenton and the Shabakunk Creek, but mystery still surrounds exactly when the house was built and the nature of the Green family.

Local lore holds Green, who bought the 350-acre lot that is now TCNJ, Armstrong Park and Antheil Elementary School sometime after he moved here in 1700, might have owned slaves, as many families did in New Jersey during the Colonial era, said Lisa Myers, a college spokeswoman.

What is known, said O'Neal and his wife, Lauren, is that the house is a reminder of the intimate families and sprawling farms that defined the nation's first settlers.

TCNJ's restoration project will respect the original structure of the farmhouse, but restore it for use as a quiet study and meeting place for small neighborhood groups, said Bressler.

"A thousand students live behind this house and 600 will live behind this field soon," said Bressler, pointing to the track. "We have to make sure we protect it and keep out the high traffic."

Bressler said the Green house could be a major student gathering place once proposed 600-student apartment complexes are built on three parking lots used by resident students.

Turning the Green house into a community and campus study center is supported by the Friends of the William Green House, a township community group with members in Hopewell and Lawrence, said Anne McArthur, group spokeswoman.

"Unless there is immediate intervention, this colonial treasure is in danger of being lost forever," said McArthur.