

# Landmark gets a new face

■ Students in the Historic Preservation department help re-hab an old favorite

By Sue Ryan  
Oregon Daily Emerald

Peeling paint and rotting wood. These signs of age mar the front of the Shelton-McMurphey-Johnson house at 303 Willamette St. Part of the mint green paint has been scraped away from the siding, revealing blonde-colored wood underneath.

This local landmark and its problems are typical of houses being recognized this week as part of National Historic Preservation Week.

Built in 1888, the three-story house sits on the south slope of Skinner Butte, overlooking the Eugene train station. University students are working with its owners to restore it. The class is taught through the Historic Preservation department.

George Bleekman, an adjunct assistant professor in historic preservation, instructs the course.

"We got involved this past summer as part of a field school," he said. "The work has continued this spring with students doing some re-creation."

The re-creation work involves making parts to match existing decorative trim. Bleekman said the excessive ornamentation is distinctive of the Queen Anne Victorian style.

Tourist literature from the City of Eugene provides a history of the Shelton-Johnson-McMurphey house, which

was built for Dr. T.W. Shelton, who at one time owned all of Skinner Butte. He was a doctor and druggist, and involved in establishing the first water utility in Eugene. Ownership of the house passed from Shelton to his daughter's family, the McMurgeys, and was then purchased by Dr. Eva Johnson. She donated the house to Lane County in 1986. Ownership later transferred to the City of Eugene, and the house is now managed by the nonprofit SMJ Associates organization, which has formed a partnership with the University.

SMJ Director Betty Murrell said the five-year agreement between the University and the organization helps to make the house a living laboratory for history. The arrangement benefits both the organization and students, and it will also help fulfill future University requirements, Bleekman said.

"Starting this fall, incoming students into the Historic Preservation program will be required to have two weeks worth of field school for their degree," she said.

SMJ Associates raise funds to restore the house in addition to recruit-



The Shelton-McMurphey-Johnson house is nestled in a forest park of Skinner Butte and overlooks the Eugene train station.

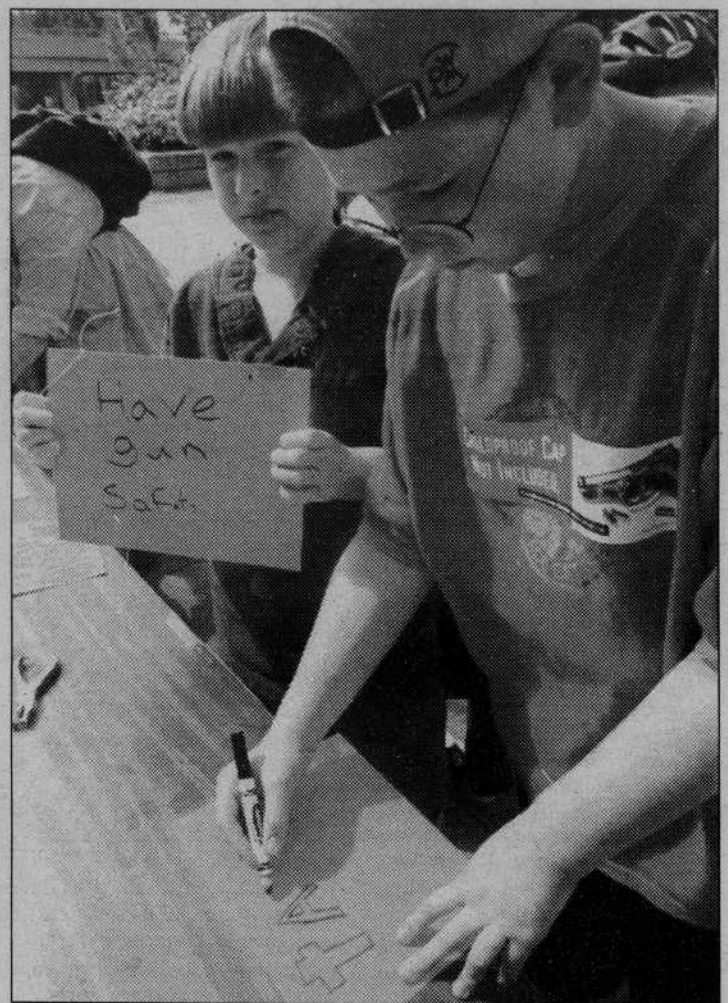
ing and coordinating volunteers, who work on displays for the house and give tours, including field trips for local schoolchildren.

"We tie displays to different lessons — women's rights, architecture," Murrell said. "By having interesting artifacts, it helps us to interpret what was happening at the time."

Hankies, flowers and calling cards are all examples of social communication tools of the era, Murrell explained.

"Girls asking boys out is nothing new," she said. "When kids come through the house, I show them how girls used to flip their hankies one way or another and it meant something like 'Meet me behind the hydrangea bush at 3 o'clock.' The kids love it." Educational outreach is the most important part of the organization's mission, Murrell said.

## Safety First



Ben Garvey for the Emerald  
Brothers Matt and Andrew Powelson make signs for the Million Mom March held Sunday, which was organized locally and nationwide to protest gun violence.

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