

Flavel House: 'It hasn't been this way in a long time'

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Fixer-upper

Built in 1901 for Capt. George Conrad Flavel, the Flavel House is the architectural equivalent of a transition fossil, possessing features from the Victorian and Colonial Revival periods. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1986.

When Newenhof bought the house for more than \$221,000, its visual grandeur had faded. Outside, the windows were boarded up and the roof was falling apart. Inside, the plaster is cracked and cratered. Layers of wallpaper are peeling away. The floor on the second story is rotted in places. And most surfaces remain covered with a thick coat of dust and grim.

"Some people thought it should be torn down, thought it was in bad shape," Newenhof said. "But, to me, it doesn't look nearly as bad as a lot of houses."

Since then, he has replaced the roof, repaired the two chimneys, removed a basement furnace and restored electrical service. Though he hooked water and sewer back up, he will need to replumb the entire house before anyone can actually drink the water.

When the boards on the windows came down, Muriel Jensen said it was as if the eyes of the house were opening up.

"Even before the Christmas lights, when we could see him working inside with the lights on downstairs, it was wonderful," she said. "It's like the house is alive again."

Meanwhile, Newenhof is replacing broken windows, some balusters and the front porch railing, aiming to recreate the original design. His next project is to heat the house.

Despite the house's haggard appearance, "it's built like a rock," said John Goodenberger, a local expert in historic preservation.

The houses of the era were built to last, Newenhof said. "A new house, if it hasn't



Lights adorn the balcony and front porch of the Flavel House.

Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

'It's like the house is alive again.'

Muriel Jensen

Astoria resident and author

been lived in for 25 years, would be rotted away," he said.

If the Flavel House has to have a non-Flavel occupant, Goodenberger is glad it's Newenhof.

"Greg is local, he owns (City Lumber), he knows how to do the work, he loves history and he's going to live here," Goodenberger said. "All of these things are a nice conclusion to a long story."

Christmas memories

Along with dozens of the Flavels' Christmas cards that Newenhof recovered from

the attic, there are 1920s-era photos of Mary Louise Flavel growing up there as a child at Christmastime. She moved out of the house in 1990 and now lives in the Portland area.

This year, Newenhof plans to invite his own family — his brother, sister-in-law and their children — to see the long neglected house. The house may not be ready to live in, but it's ready to create new Christmas memories.

"It hasn't been this way for a long time," Curt Johnson said. "It's really got a lot of life and excitement, a lot of hope."



A Christmas tree lights up a window of the Flavel House.

Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

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