

Historical Society's 'little yellow house' being restored

By Mary Jo Pitzl

That little yellow house tucked away on 16th St. is being renovated by the Nebraska Historical Society.

The Syford house, 700 N. 16th St., dates back to the days when 16th St. was a tract of unsettled farmland.

Workmen have been scraping the paint off the exterior of the house for several weeks. The Naval Reserve has volunteered to paint the house, which will be restored to its original color of olive gold, according to Herb Thomas, Historical Society artist in charge of the repainting.

"I hope in the next few years we can get the house open to the public," said Wendell Frantz, curator of the Lincoln Museum of the Nebraska State Historical Society.

The Historical Society is restoring the house to its original condition as money becomes available, Frantz said. The Syford house is listed in the National Register of Historical Places, qualifying it for federal funds.

Money requested

In 1970, the Historical Society received about \$6,000 in matching federal funds, and the society has requested \$5,000 from the National Parks Service.

The two-story house was built about 1878, according to Frantz. Constance Syford willed her family's home to the State Historical Society Foundation when she died in 1965, Frantz said.

"Apparently the Syfords were the second owners," he said. Historical Society records show the Syford family lived in the house from 1904 until the late 1930's. Constance then moved to Connecticut, where she managed the rest of her family's estate.

Elisha Lewis, a Presbyterian missionary minister, built the house when he moved to Lincoln to establish a parish, Frantz said. The house is constructed in the style of the French Second Empire, an architectural style of the late 19th century.

Part of lot sold

The original lot of the house extended to 17th St., but part of it was sold to the university and converted into a parking lot, Frantz said.

Until restoration is completed and the house becomes open to the public, it is not unoccupied. Jim and Gail Potter, employees of the Historical Society, have made the Syford house their home. Potter moved

into the house eight years ago because the society wanted someone to keep an eye on the place, he said.

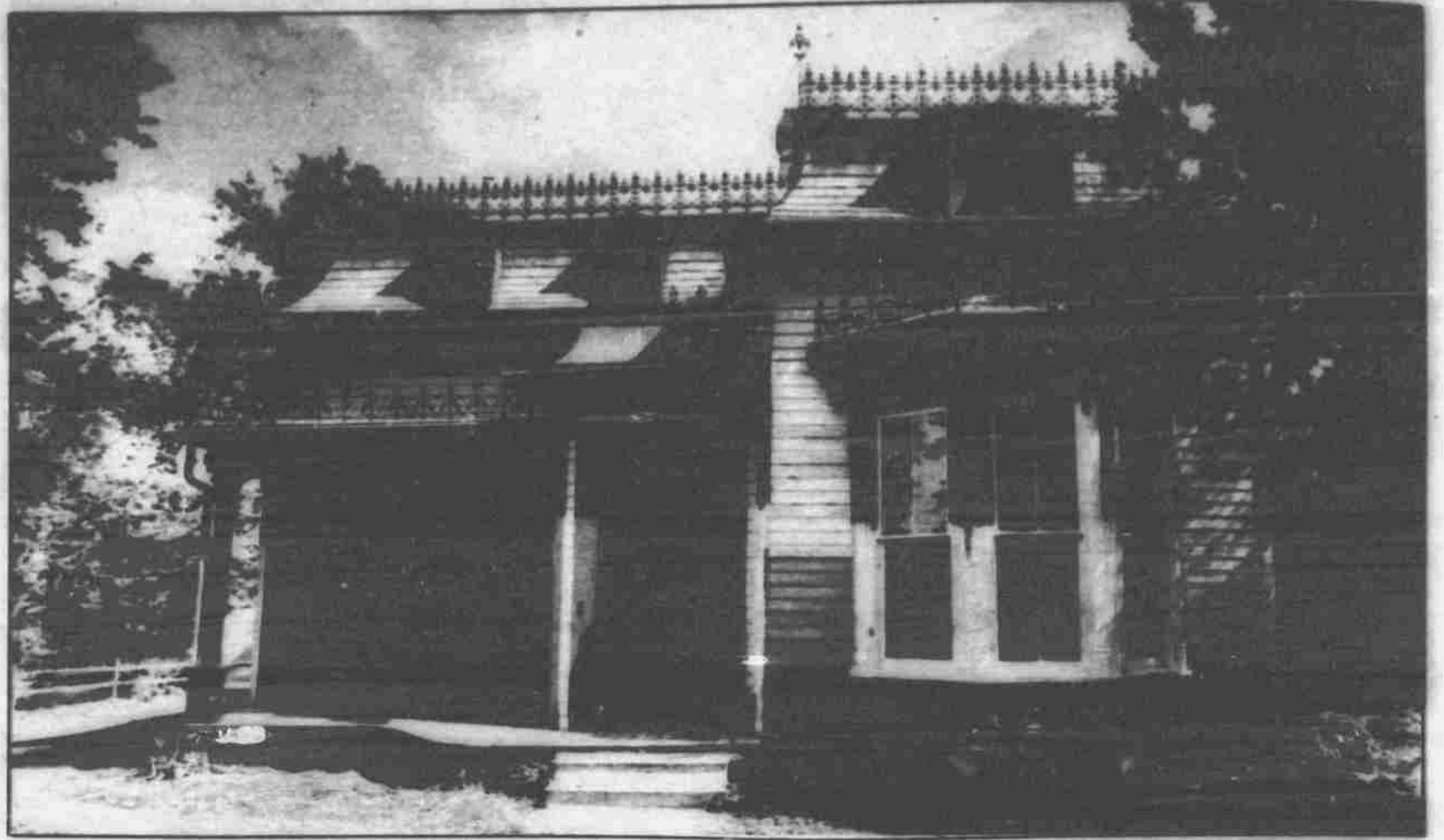
The Historical Society is cataloging and storing a lot of the Syford furniture, which will be displayed when the house is open to the public, Frantz said. Bigger pieces, such as a wooden sideboard and kitchen appliances, remain in the house and are used by the Potters.

Living in the Syford house has advantages and disadvantages. It is close to the Historical Society, where the Potters work, and they are only required to pay utilities. But there is noise and activity at late hours because of the

house's university location, Potter said. "A lot of people look at the house," Mrs Potter said, adding that occasionally someone will stop and ask about it. "The majority of the people don't even know it's here. They just think it's the abandoned house on campus," she said.

The Potters plan to stay at the Syford house indefinitely, although "we don't want to live here forever," Mrs. Potter said.

"I prefer rustic," she said, "but maybe this is carrying it a little too far."



Daily Nebraskan Photo

Workmen are in the process of scraping paint from the Syford house, 700 North 16th St.

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