



Bryan museum is under way.

Photo by Mark Billingsley

Bryan museum receives fixing-up

By Debbie Beavers

After a 19-year delay, restoration of the William Jennings Bryan museum was continued this summer. It was the first restoration work since 1962.

The museum, which will be open to the public seven days a week, has slowly been progressing towards complete restoration, museum curator Gale Potter said.

Through financing by the State Historical Society and through private donations, a bedroom and a sitting room were restored this summer. The basement of the building now is being used as a child care center for Bryan Memorial Hospital employees. Prior to that change, it was equipped with a kitchen and dining room.

The museum is located in Fairview, the William Jennings Bryan home at 49th and Sumner streets.

The statue of Bryan that stands outside the museum has been the subject of recent controversy as to whether it should instead be located at the state Capitol. Rod Armstrong, legislative aide to Sen. Steve Fowler of Lincoln who proposed relocating the statue, explained that there are a couple of problems to deal with before a decision can be made, including who the statue's rightful owner is.

In 1941, the Legislature passed a resolution stating that Bryan, a former presidential candidate, should be honored with a statue. Thus a commission was formed to arrange donations.

But when the statue was placed at the north entrance of the Capitol, a group of Republicans convinced the governor that it showed prejudice to display Bryan, a Democrat, on the most prominent side of the Capitol,

when the statue of Abraham Lincoln, a Republican, was on the west side.

Architects also complained that the statue detracted from the Capitol's architectural value.

Bryan Memorial Hospital then had the statue moved to Fairview, but the state hasn't taken title to the statue and the commission that arranged its financing never transferred the title to the state.

A legislative hearing is scheduled for Oct. 30 to discuss the feasibility of moving the statue and its true ownership.

Marvin Kivett, director of the State Historical Society, agrees that the statue could detract from the architectural value of the state Capitol if it is placed at the north entrance.



Photo by Mark Billingsley
William Jennings Bryan

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