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The Annie B. Ryan House had been boarded up since 1978 and was owned by the California Department of Transportation until 2003 when it was sold through the city of Eureka to the Ink People Center for the Arts. In the photo, Bill Hole, College of the Redwoods professor of construction and historic preservation technology, helps student Susie Purcell replace a piece on an old window frame. Joni Schrantz/The Eureka Reporter

## Learning restoration

by Renee Gusching, 10/9/2007

The students in Bill Hole's Historic Preservation and Restoration Technologies courses at College of the Redwoods face a challenge.

The challenge stands, as it has for more than a century, at 1000 F St., in Eureka.

The dilapidated-looking Queen Anne cottage that has become a field school for CR students challenges students to consider how to make a historic house into a home livable by today's standards. Further complicating the challenge is the goal of keeping intact a historic structure's historical elements and not ruin them in renovation. As Hole, a professor of construction and historic preservation technology at CR, tells his students, "It's a real balancing act of theory and practice."

This is the third semester Hole has spent teaching his students adaptive reuse, the Annie B. Ryan Historic Family House and Gardens Project the focus of the classes' efforts.

Hole unlocked the house's boarded up front door last week and led the way through the small, two-bedroom structure. A quick scan of the site revealed the havoc that can result from 22 years of abandonment.

Upon scrutinizing the house's interior, however, the hours students have spent laboring over the surfaces became apparent. Running a hand along the casing surrounding front room windows and doors found it smooth to the touch, the

intricate detail of the wood visible.

Opening a tool chest, Hole pulled out a number of hand tools. The tools had been cut to fit each individual section of trim like an adjoining puzzle piece and used to strip the aged surfaces. The plaster walls in the room were almost ready for painting and the reparation of rotting wood on a window frame dominating a work table was already under way.

"I'm teaching people how to use same like and kind materials, "redwood for redwood, old growth for old growth," Hole said. The building is a textbook for us. It's really ideal."

"We're learning how to work on the house carefully to preserve what's there and re-create the rest in the old way as much as we can," said program student Pam Chestnut.

The process began after students went over the entire structure with a fine-tooth comb and prepared a historical analysis.

Since then, individuals in a number of CR classes have together repaired the house's foundation, removed wood that had been boarding up windows, replaced much of the house's glass, installed temporary wiring and completed interior surface work.

At the moment, the focus is on the house's exterior wood siding.

Hole moved about the house as he spoke.

"This is 140-year-old plaster and it's in amazing shape," he said as he entered a bedroom. While stepping into a back room that may have been a utility room, Hole stomped on the floor and noted, "This was all rotten."

Following the secretary of the interior's "standards for the treatment of historic properties allows the buildings to keep their charm, Hole said. The final product, in this case a rental house, will have the same detailing and the same surface materials.

"Instead of giving up on the building, we're bringing it back to its original surfaces," Hole said, adding that not maintaining historic buildings is discounting the energy that was originally used to build them.

Just 10 years into its existence, CR's HPRT program is one of only two such undergraduate programs in the country. The Annie B. Ryan House is the college's first real field school.

If future workers are not taught how to work on historic structures, Hole said there will be less trades for people to work in, including the field of historic renovation.

"I'm coming at it with the intent of teaching tomorrow's labor," he said.

Because the program doesn't have a budget, Hole said grants were written to buy tools and start the program. It's the support of community residents who donate materials and sign up for classes that keeps it going, he added.

"I see the vision. I see this working," Hole said. "I would love to see this house completely restored by students."



Bill Hole, CR professor of construction and historic preservation technology, repairs on an old window frame at the Annie B. Ryan House. Hole's Field Technologies class works on the house each Saturday. Joni Schrantz/The Eureka Reporter



Students measure on an old window frame in the Queen Anne cottage. Joni Schrantz/The Eureka Reporter