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# Donated caretaker's house may one day serve as museum

By **CHRISTINA HOLDER**, Staff Writer  
January 7, 2004

The gray, boarded-up caretaker's house sitting on concrete blocks on the Boomer family estates in Estero is no longer the charming home former caretaker Evelyn Horne remembers.

The wrap-around porch where her son Billy would play with the family dog has been torn away. The fireplace that heated the house on chilly nights is empty, and the nine or so rugs it took to cover the floors of the living room are gone.

"It looks kind of dilapidated," Horne said. "It will get better, though."

Members of the Estero Historical Society plan to renovate the 1927 historic Garcia house and move it to the new 55-acre Estero Community Park, scheduled to break ground off Corkscrew Road in February.

Members of the Koreshan utopian society built the house, named for a caretaker and his family that lived there for 40 years.

Nola Boomer, the widow of Berthaldine Boomer's grandson, donated the house to the Estero Historical Society. Berthaldine Boomer was a member of the Koreshan utopian society, whose members settled in the Estero area in the late 1800s.

Historical Society President Mimi Straub hopes the Garcia house eventually will serve as a museum and a headquarters for the society.

Recently, Straub visited a historic house in Sparta, Ga., that had been converted into a museum. The building also had an addition for office space.

"It looked like the same architecture as the building," she said. "That is something that I would love to do."

Straub said she would like to take a similar approach with the Garcia house. The idea is to display documents and Koreshan artifacts, rebuild the porch and stock it with rocking chairs and create a space for the society's files and office equipment, which is housed in an extra bedroom in Straub's Estero house.



Photo by Erik Kellar

**Evelyn Horne, pictured in front of the Garcia home on the Boomer family estate in Estero, moved into the home with her family 50 years ago. The Boomer family has donated the home to the Estero Historical Society and is working on plans to restore the historic building so it can serve as the society's headquarters.**

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"I'm determined that we are going to have some sort of museum to remember Estero how it was," she said.

Society board members are discussing steps to take to restore the house, Straub said.

Shaping up the house is going to take a great deal of work, according to Boomer estates' caretaker Eric Wilson.

The concrete steps are chipped. The roof needs hurricane clips to strengthen the structure. The gray paint on the house is flaking.

"You've got to patch and strip that paint off," Wilson said.

Wilson, who has helped to restore the main Boomer house, said he also has volunteered to help restore the Garcia house.

Straub said she is waiting on a decision by her board as to how to approach the renovation process.

In the meantime, Straub has plans for the future of the house. The Lee County decision to reserve space for the house in the park is one that will benefit park visitors, she said.

"They go to a community park to be entertained," she said. "It (the house) also can be a source of entertainment for family," she said.

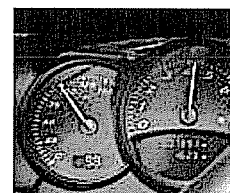
Horne, 81, said she is looking forward to seeing her former home in the park.

She lived in the house from 1948 to 1953 while maintaining the Boomer property and cleaning the main house's 17 rooms.

"I'd like to see it restored back like it was," she said.



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