



The Home News/Marc Aacher

The current owners of the former Wyckoff house, which dates to 1711, are restoring their Middlebush Road home to period.

## Wedding gift could turn museum

### Cornelius Wyckoff house in Franklin being restored after 275 years

By JENNIFER JUDD  
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FRANKLIN — The land the house stands on was a wedding gift from Cornelius Wyckoff to his son, John, in 1704. The house that John built on the land more than 275 years ago still sits on South Middlebush Road in the Middlebush section of Franklin Township.

Sold in 1972 to the state to make way for a reservoir proposed for the area, the Wyckoff house was virtually ignored for years.

But Margaret Sharp, who has an interest in history, and Robert Hayton, with an interest in architecture, have begun work on restoring what is easily, according to Sharp, one of the oldest buildings in the township.

"This is one of the oldest and most interesting homes in the area," Sharp said.

Sharp and Hayton's goal is to get the two-and-a-half story house in shape for nomination to The National Register of Historic Places.

The register will accept or reject a house based on its history, architecture and archaeology, Sharp said.

The Wyckoff House doesn't seem to be missing any of the necessary ingredients.

Probably the most famous occupant of the house, said Sharp, was Peter Wyckoff, John's grandson.

Born in the farmhouse in 1743, Peter moved to Harper's Ferry to manufacture muskets of "superior quality," Sharp said. These muskets were used later in the Revolutionary War.

Legend has it, Sharp said, that Peter's father, also Cornelius, was the first white child born in the area. Most who lived in this part of New Jersey in the 1700's were Indians. Cornelius was probably born in about 1710, Sharp said.

In its more recent history, the carriage house on the property where caretaker Hayton lives once was a turkey farm.

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coming from the Meadows Foundation, a local historical preservation group. Sharp and Hayton are members of the group.

Supplying advice on the restoration is a Highland Park-based firm, Research Archaeological Management. R.A.M., Sharp said, is especially interested in the land surrounding the farmhouse.

With some testing and excavating, Peter Primavera, R.A.M. project director, said it's possible traces of the Lenape Indians, who were living in the area in the 1600's, might be found.

The register should view the one-and-a-quarter-acre tract of land especially valuable, said Primavera.

For the last two centuries, it has remained "virtually untouched."

Getting a house ready for nomination to the register is no easy task, but Sharp and Hayton are aiming for June.

A goal after the house is registered, Sharp said, is to turn it into a "living history museum, which will depict Dutch life in colonial Somerset County."

*Past Premises is a weekly real estate feature.*