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A new preservation effort is under way at Battersea and it involves getting help from the community.

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A new preservation effort is under way at Battersea and it involves getting help from the community.

Battersea is one of the historical jewels of Petersburg. Now, restoration experts want to get the public involved in the effort to stabilize and restore the Palladian-style 1767 home.

Recently, the folks at Battersea held a workshop on limewashing and using lime to restore historic buildings.

"We want to offer educational opportunities and involve the public throughout the stabilization and restoration process," said John Lee, of the John Greenwalt Lee Company, and who held the workshop

The estate is in need of immediate repairs related to moisture and drainage damage. To stop moisture damage that was caused by improper masonry repairs years ago, workshop participants removed Portland cement parging from around bricks below the water table. Lee said that would solve the problem and the house should immediately begin to dry out.

Battersea is an important Colonial plantation house that was constructed near the banks of the Appomattox River in 1768 for John Banister, first mayor of Petersburg, a Revolutionary delegate, congressman and framer of the Articles of Confederation. The sectional massing of Battersea displays the neo-Palladian style as popularized in England in the 18th century and embraced in Colonial Virginia.

During the Revolutionary War, British troops occupied the house on more than one occasion.

The city purchased the home and 37 ares of land for \$200,000 in 1985. In an inspired move, the city joined forces with the nonprofit group last year to make the historic Revolutionary War era estate a "focal point" for the Tri-Cities. It is just one example of the many partnerships in the area that we believe will play a crucial role in the revitalization of the region

Tempy Barbru, Battersea Inc. executive director, said the initial phase of stabilizing the property is expected to cost about \$500,000. So far, about half of that has been raised from public and private sources including the City of Petersburg, the Elmwood Foundation and the Cameron Foundation.

The work at Battersea doesn't just involve securing and stabilizing the house. There is plenty of activity going on around the house's 37-acre property. This past summer, archaeological teams unearthed almost 3,000 artifacts. They learned much about colonial life and even pre-historical settlements on the banks of the Appomattox.

"Battersea has a rich history," Barbru said, "and with citizen and community involvement the villa has the potential to be a focal point for educational activities, enriched cultural life and a variety of civic uses."

Barbru said a stabilization project will likely begin in the spring after identifying a qualified contractor for the job.

But in the meantime, Battersea officials were wise to invite the public to come out and help with the house while learning a bit about history. After all, Battersea will hopefully turn into a historical catalyst for the area. And since this historical gem is owned by the public, it was only fitting that the community came out to help fix its historic house.

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