



PHOTO: SUSAN MCCONNELL

Mary Smith stands on the front porch of Barrington's White House in October 2013 before renovations had begun. Smith successfully guided the funding commitment for the project to completion in the summer months of 2016.

The Final Steps in Renewing a Community Treasure

I HAVE A “THING” ABOUT STAIRCASES. If the treads don't sound solid under foot, the whole building, no matter what it otherwise has to offer, is suspect. The steps in the front hall of the old Robertson house on Main Street sounded good to me.

The massive cut limestone, on which the front

porch rests, is probably from Indiana. From the street, because of its clear and consistent gray color, I took it to be artistically laid cement blocks. Wrong.

And what about the ornate, Corinthian-style capitals at the top of the columns on the porch? Surely they'd been painted many times over 100-plus years.

Could they be salvaged? No problem at all. They're metal.

If you're thrilled by breathtaking things that happen for all the world to see, I hope you were on hand when the old roof was removed from this historic house.

Our White House, newly listed on the National Register of Historic Places, provides endless opportunities to marvel at its recent makeover and new Gold LEED status. Running from front of the house to back, with music in the air, is a lovely and enlarged ballroom that fills the third floor. On the second floor, local not-for-profit organizations continue to enrich the lives of everyone calling 60010 home.

Before one bit of work on the White House was started in 2013, the necessity to envision a self-supporting community house had become the number one priority for all of us involved in this project. Today, the outcome is practical and lovely, with every bit of the house used to its best advantage. Brand new, I sincerely believe the house will pay its own way.

I agreed to be the fundraising “face” for the restoration of the Robertson house in late summer, 2013. Writing these words today in late summer 2016 gives me great pleasure, because with the help of over 700 generous people, families, companies, and foundations, fundraising for Barrington's White House has come to an end!

The house is paid for, and is—in every way—already serving us very well. Cultural events and private parties beckon us. Thanks to each and every one of you for your participation in this particular once-in-a-lifetime success story.

As I step away, please always keep this in mind: The Village of Barrington owns the White House, but it is managed by its own freestanding advisory board that provides keen oversight within the house and in its gardens. While moving into the future, the words ‘sustainability and reserves’ become crucial, and reflect the need for all not-for-profit organizations to fund, assure, and ensure bright futures.

Barrington's White House is no exception to the rule. Will you please keep this in mind, and support the newly initiated White House Reserve Fund? This fund will remain in place, and is an open-ended invitation to help support Barrington's White House. Thank you!

Congratulations to all of us, and congratulations to the Village of Barrington! U

Mary S. Smith is a long-time Barrington resident and has served as chairwoman of efforts to gather public funding for the renovation of Barrington's White House.