

*The following editorial does not express the official view of The Friends of the William Green Farmhouse. It expresses the opinion of the current vice president.*

What would your neighbors say if you bought a house and let it go derelict for 55 years?

For sixty years a plaque stood mounted on the west exterior wall of The William Green House, which is located on the current College of New Jersey campus in Ewing Township, New Jersey, placed there in 1929 by the Lanning School children to commemorate Wm Green III's service in the Hunterdon Militia during the American War ([Land Along the Shabakunks p 100](#)). In the 1980s, one of our incorporators—Michael McCormack—had it removed and placed in the College Union Board office for safe keeping. Twenty years later I reported to that office, identified myself as a trustee of the friends and requested to be shown the plaque. A staff member directed me to another office, from where I was directed to yet another office and then another and another. Eventually I finally met someone who claimed he knew where the plaque was kept. He pointed and said, "It's in that room... right through that door." Upon opening the door, I found myself back in the College Union Board office, being greeted by the same staff member who had initiated my now-finished wild goose chase.

The above anecdote is all too indicative of The College of New Jersey administration's daily operations. One hand rarely knows what the other hand is doing. Numerous times over the last 15 years we have been introduced to some new person who is assuming the responsibility of working with us and none of them ever know what has happened to the house prior to their arrival or assumption of duties. Many of these liaisons have been fired, asked to leave, or else were used as the rope in a tug-of-war. Through all of this, the president of the college has not once agreed to meet with us to discuss the derelict state of the house.

It is the opinion of some trustees of our group, including myself, that The College of New Jersey should fully finance the restoration of The William Green House and they should do so without further delay. Their blatant poor stewardship is the reason for the current condition of the house. Since purchasing the house in the 1959, they have proven indifferent to historic preservation. For example, in 1965 the final phase of the college's occupation of their current campus was completed when eminent domain was exercised, forcing the last Green family member to sell the Hendrickson farmhouse and last remaining portion of Samuel Green's former homestead located on the college side of current State Road 31. Two years later, [the former Hendrickson farmhouse at Green's Curve](#) was demolished by the college. Samuel Green had added this tract to the original farm in the early 1800s and three subsequent

generations of his family later lived there. To quote Robert Reeder Green, older brother of the last Green occupant of said property:

“In 1965 the State brought condemnation procedure against the old (Hendrickson) farm house and land thus forcing my sister and her husband to move from the old homestead. The house stood vacant for some two years before it was bulldozed. My sister had barely closed the door behind them when the vandals moved in... It is hard to realize that in so short a time this once busy and active farm area could be gone. Not the slightest trace of it is left...” (The Land Along the Shabakunks p92)

The college understands nothing save political and public embarrassment. It was The Friends of the Wm Green Farmhouse who convinced the college to surround the Wm Green House with a protective fence to abate the vandals and trespassers; we initiated the dialogue that led to the eventual [mothballing of the house](#) by arranging the intervention of the State Assemblyman Reed Gusiciora and his chief aide. A visit to [our video page](#) and our [news articles page](#) will confirm some of our failed past efforts. After 15 years of delays, broken promises, red tape, and rhetoric, the friends approached the college administration to request permission to seek a lease for the house. We were denied that request and told that the college has no interest in supporting our effort to restore the house to its former glory, an effort that legally lies in their lap, not ours. This circular battle goes back to 1976, [at which point plans were drawn and empty promises were made by the college.](#)

If we wait for the college to act, we will see nothing but continued delays and excuses. As their own Peter Mills stated to us many years ago, “The State is not kind to the State.” We cannot depend on them to act in the interest of the house. Therefore, at this critical juncture in the future of the house, we need to force them to restore the house without further delay.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Billy Joe O'Neal, Jr." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Billy Joe O'Neal, Jr.

Past President, Current Vice President and Trustee of The Friends of the Wm Green Farmhouse

