

Historians Want To Raise \$35,000 For House Project

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MELBOURNE BEACH — Local historians will kickoff a major restoration project this weekend to restore the oldest remaining home on the barrier island.

Historians hope to raise \$35,000 in coming months to restore the Ryckman House, which is owned by Melbourne Beach and leased to the South Brevard Sea Turtle Preservation Society.

Originally built in the 1880s, it was home to Ruth Ryckman until 1979 when she died at age 97. Her father, G.E. Ryckman, was one of the original shareholders in the town.

"It's the oldest house between Cape Canaveral and Fort Pierce," said town historian Frank Thomas.

"The idea is to restore it to its 1889 condition."

Town commissioners already have donated \$10,000 to the project, but \$35,000 more is needed to put on a new roof, replace the old cypress siding, put in old-style windows and remove the plumbing, Thomas said. Public restrooms will be added behind the house, which will still be wired for electricity.

The kickoff for the restoration will be Saturday during a walking tour and slide show in Melbourne Beach, organized by the South Brevard Historical Society.

Town artifacts, such as old newspaper clippings and photos, will be on the display in the old Beaujean house and post office, which sits beside the Melbourne Beach post office on Ocean Avenue. The event runs from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday.

The town history committee hopes to begin the restoration within a month, Thomas said.

"It would be nice if it were done by next Founder's Day," a celebration of the town's beginning held each May, he said.

For more information about the fund-raiser or Saturday's historic tour, call Thomas at (407) 723-2655.