

Rebuilding a Piscataway treasure



Tarps and plywood cover the windows and roof of the Metlar-Bodine House Museum on Friday after an electrical fire devastated the house in July. Officials hope to have a temporary roof on the house by next month, with a permanent one when there is enough money.

COURIER NEWS PHOTOS BY JACK HOWARD

Metlar-Bodine House closer to reconstruction after concert fund-raiser

By REKA BALA
Staff Writer

PISCATAWAY — Efforts to rebuild the fire-damaged Metlar-Bodine House Museum continued Friday as board members held a fund-raiser for a new \$120,000 roof.

The house, named after George Metlar, was nearly destroyed in July after a raging blaze tore through much of the 300-year-old building and gutted almost everything, including the downstairs kitchen, dining and living rooms, and ruined a number of important documents and items.

Since then, residents continually have tried to raise money to restore the historical site, at 1281 River Road, through various events both at the Metlar House and nearby locations.

Friday's fund-raiser, at The Forum Theatre in Metuchen, was a concert that attracted more than 300 people, said Jim Robinson of New Jersey Prog-house, which sponsored the event.

Last month, the Stress Factory Comedy Club in New Brunswick hosted an event for the house that raised about \$1,200, said Ken Karamichael,

who is on the board of trustees for the house.

Karamichael said the board hopes to have a temporary roof on the house by next month, so the museum can avoid further damage from inclement weather that might occur during the winter. He said a permanent roof soon will follow once there is enough money.

"We're competing against Mother Nature to get the house prepped for the winter," Karamichael said.

After completion of the roof, Karamichael said the board will begin cleaning the sides of the house and the interior.

He said the house's reconstruction could start as early as next spring and could last for up to two years.

Karamichael said the board is also looking for a secure location to store any documents that survived the fire.

Musical guests at Friday's concert included Neal Morse of Tennessee and Mike Portnoy of New York. Tickets cost \$35, with all proceeds going to the museum.

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Hara Durkin, associate director of the museum, points out a pile of fire-damaged and destroyed items.