

# Raccoons wreak havoc at historic Haller House

- by RON NEWBERRY, Whidbey Examiner Reporter
- Dec 23, 2015

As majestic as the old cherry plum tree was that leaned over the roof, its affection for the Haller House was not doing the historic building any favors.

The tree invited raccoons onto the roof, where they dug a hole through soft shingles and sheathing, squeezed inside and took up residence last year. Once the hole was patched, the critters came back aggravated, digging test holes all over the roof looking for the most vulnerable entry points and springing leaks into the home in the process while creating cavities large enough for smaller critters to enter.

“One day this summer, I saw three squirrels jump out of the holes in the Haller roof one after another,” said Lynn Hyde, board president of Historic Whidbey, a nonprofit that is trying to purchase the 1860 home and turn it into a territorial-era interpretive center.

The work to protect the grand home on Front Street continues. The old tree was removed in late November, the roof was repatched and a new roof is planned for installation in the spring. Funding to remove the tree and help replace the old roof has come through a grant from the Coupeville Festival Association.

In the meantime, Historic Whidbey is trying to raise \$250,000 by May 15 to acquire the property and keep it off the market.

The cherry plum tree, estimated to be about 80-years-old, had to go because it grew up and over the historic Brunn House, which adjoins the Haller House at the rear and is all considered one property, according to Hyde.

The Brunn House has no foundation and pouring one at some point will be essential to restoring the home, Hyde said.

“There was no way to do that with the tree there,” she said, adding that branches had dangled only inches above the roof.

And of course, there was another reason removing the tree was pivotal to the home’s future health and preservation.

“There was really no way to keep the raccoons out permanently except by cutting down their elevator,” Hyde said.

To learn more about efforts to preserve the Haller House, go to [www.historicwhidbey.org](http://www.historicwhidbey.org)