The Lunney takes visitors back to 1900s

BY ANDREW MOORE
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SENECA — Dozens of special guests stepped through the front door of the 100-year-old Lunney House on Thursday night and into another era.

The Lunney House Museum reopened its doors to the public for the first time since the city of Seneca acquired it from the county, following months of meticulous renovations.

"When I walked through here, it was just amazing," Mayor Dan Alexander said. "So many people worked so hard to make this happen. This is a good example of people working together with the government and making something wonderful. I can't help but think about Mr. Lunney and Mrs. Lunney in this home, and I know they're proud today."

For Seneca, it's been a major investment. The city finalized the purchase of the structure in 2009 for $45,000 and then

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Music filled the air Thursday night at The Lunney House Museum's grand reopening, which drew dozens of visitors.

LUNNEY: Renovated

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spent $40,000 more in Hospitality and Accommodation Tax (HAT) money for restorations.

The invitation-only event Thursday drew more than 80 people to the home, which now boasts numerous historical items never seen before by the public.

An exhibit room at the rear of the home also provides visitors with more information about the home's history.

For House Museum Manager John Martin, Thursday was the fruition of months of work and planning.

"I'm listening to people talk. People who have been here before, friends who know each other, and they're saying it's going to be good for the city, that we're bringing it back to what it used to be," Martin said. "It's the new South."

The nine-room Lunney House was built in 1909 and was the home of Dr. William John Lunney and Lilian Mason Lunney, the latter of whom called it her home until her death 60 years later. The next year, her sister, Myra Mason Lindemann, deeded the home to Oconee County for the purpose of creating a museum. For a little over a decade, it was operated by the Oconee County Historical and Recreational Society. In the 1980s, the Oconee County Museum Association took over stewardship.

In 2007, the museum board received no county funding and asked for the city's help. The rest, as they say, is history.

"It's great. It's more than we could have expected," said volunteer Kevin Harbin, who worked countless hours on the project.

"It's just great to see the work we've put into this be appreciated, for it being back like it was in 1909 — when it was first moved into. There's still a lot more to get done, but I think with the help from the city and the public, it'll come through."

The museum will be open to the public today for the kickoff of Seneca Fest, the fourth annual Memorial Weekend celebration, which expected to draw tens of thousands to the downtown area. Now, visitors will see another side of Seneca.

"Seneca has so many wonderful things here, but to be able to hold on to this history, it's special," Alexander said. "We'll be able to share this story for a long time."

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