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Makeover magic for Victorian home

By Howard Huntington
of the Daily Courier

Done — almost.

George Jones says he's 99 percent finished restoring one of the best-known Victorians in Grants Pass, at Seventh and A streets. It took four years — twice as long as he had figured — and \$250,000. "I guess the biggest surprise was just how much time it takes to do quality work," he says.

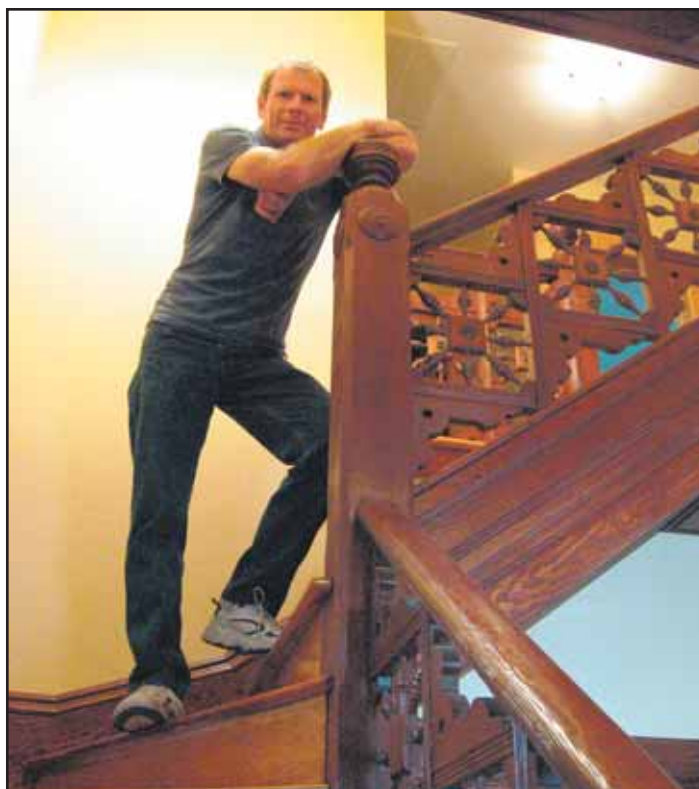
This George Jones can hardly sing a note, but probably swings a hammer as well as the country-music star plays the git-tar.

A local miller, John Kendall, built the house in 1903. He died only three years later and the house went to the Milledge family, in the grocery business.

By the time Jones bought it in 2003, the building was struggling to stay up. He moved it 6 feet closer to A Street, built a new foundation, completely rewired and replumbed the place, improved the heating and added air conditioning.

The house no longer qualifies for the National Register of Historic Places because he couldn't duplicate the original siding and added thermal-pane windows.

But he labored to preserve the history — even as he converted the home to an office



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George Jones poses inside the Victorian home.

building with room for as many as seven tenants. The house came with a separate package of old hardware and trim that he reinstalled, and a local craftsman, John Rodgers, recreated missing trim from scratch.

"Each piece was labeled and numbered and had its location written on the back," Jones says. "To get it all to fit back in square and tight, to do a good trim job, we are talking 16th-of-an-inch. If it was not for the quality of the material

and the craftsmanship of the original carpenters, it couldn't have reappeared."

He remembers one man in a classic car — another product of painstaking restoration — complimenting him on the house. "Well, thanks," Jones said, "No," the man said. "Thank you."

Jones says others who wanted the property back in 2003 would have bulldozed the house, but he never considered it. He had rebuilt an even older house, now 108 years old, at 539 N.W. C St.

The Kendall house at Seventh and A is scheduled to be open for everyone to see during First Friday Art Night on Sept. 5, from 5 to 9 p.m., and on Sept. 6 from noon to 3 p.m. Some details on the project will be posted, and Jones will be there to answer questions.

He plans to have the building ready for business the following week. For more details about renting, call him at 660-6997. It's clear he won't take just anyone and would rather rent all 2,300 square feet to one party.

But for all Jones has put into it, the house could be all yours for an offer he can't refuse. "Money talks," he says.



Reach reporter Howard Huntington at 474-3726 or hhuntington@thedailycourier.com